Biblical

Church

Development

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Biblical Church Development

A Manual for Church Leaders and Church Planters

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Section I

Biblical Foundation

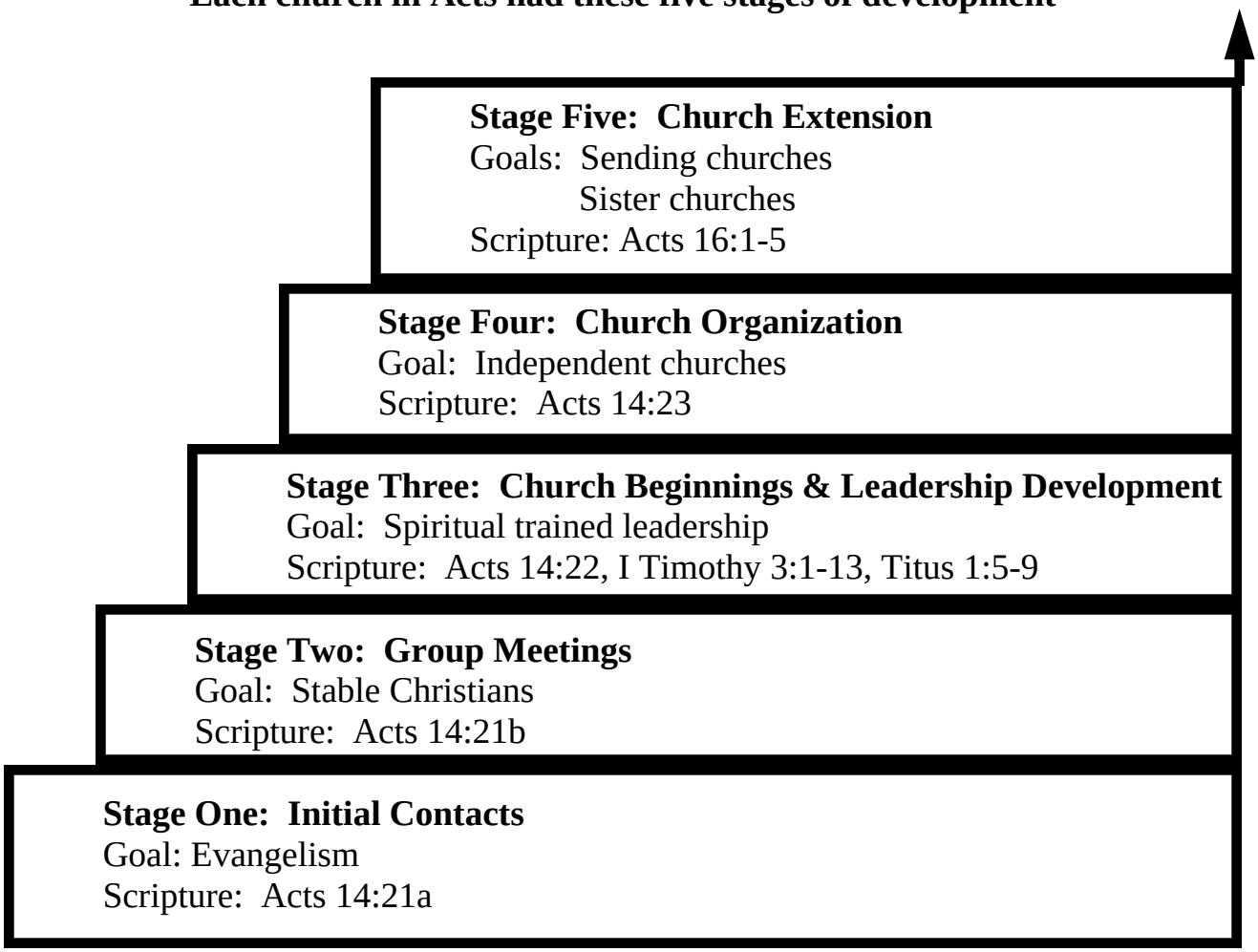
Are you a pastor or other church leader? Do you feel that the Lord may be leading you to plant a church? Are you an active church member who desires to see your church make a greater impact for the Lord? Do you have a desire to be a church leader? If one of these questions describes you, then this manual may have some answers to questions you have been asking.

God wanted us to have a clear understanding of how churches develop. For that reason He led Luke to write the book of Acts so that we have a clear picture of the development of the early churches. In the book of Acts the Holy Spirit teaches us the five stages of Biblical Church Development that happen as a church develops. If a church skips one or more of these stages in its development, it will not develop properly. If it begins to neglect one or more of these stages, it will begin to die. It is also essential that we understand the Great Commission in order for a church to develop properly.

This book is divided into six sections. The first section will give a summary of the Biblical foundation for Biblical Church Development. The remaining five sections will cover the five stages of that development. In this section we will look at the Scripture to get an overview of the five stages, learn the reasons why each stage must continue as a foundation for the following stages and develop a Biblical understanding of our Great Commission. A summary chart of the five stages of Biblical Church Development is given on the next page.

Biblical Church Development

Each church in Acts had these five stages of development



As each new stage develops, the previous stages must continue for a church to remain healthy!

		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Jerusalem	Acts	2:1-41	2:42-47	3:1-5:42	6:1-8	8:4, 14, 11:22
Antioch	Acts	11:19-21	11:22-25	11:26	13:1	13:2-4
Galatia	Acts	14:21a	14:21b	14:22	14:23	16:1-5
Corinth	Acts	18:1-6	18:7-8	18:9-11	18:12-18a	18:18b-19
Ephesus	Acts	18:24-19:7	19:8-9	19:10	19:11-21	19:22, 20:4

Chapter 1

HOW DO CHURCHES DEVELOP?

If the church that you attend right now were to be scattered to various places, would the people who attend go everywhere preaching the Word? Does that sound impossible? Has it ever happened anywhere especially when the leaders were the only ones who were not scattered? Such a church did exist. We read about it in Acts 8:4 which says, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." What gave the church at Jerusalem such an impact? Is it possible for churches today to have a similar impact? We trust that this book will have some answers to questions you have been asking.

In the book of Acts we are given enough details about the development of the churches in five areas to see that there is a pattern for Biblical church development. The churches in each of these areas go through the same five stages of development. These five areas are Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, Corinth and Ephesus. Although not as much information is given about the churches in Macedonia, the letters written to the Philippians and Thessalonians along with the book of Acts would indicate that the church in Macedonia also experienced these same stages of development.

In this chapter we will be giving an overview of the five stages of Biblical church development by using the churches of Galatia in Acts 14:21-23 and Acts 16:1-5 to illustrate them. In the following sections of the book, we will be looking at each stage in greater detail. In this chapter we will be introduced to the following stages: I. Initial contacts, II. Group meetings, III. Church beginning and leadership development, IV. Church organization and V. Church extension.

Each stage that begins in a church must continue or that church will eventually cease to exist. As a result, an effort to plant a church begins with Stage I. As the work progresses, it becomes a Stage I and II work. When it reaches a Stage I, II and III work, the church is beginning to develop. A church that includes Stages I, II, III and IV is an organized church. However, a church becomes a mature, reproducing church when all five stages are present. Now let's look at each of these five stages to see what is involved in becoming a mature, reproducing church.

Stage I - Initial Contacts

Acts 14:21 a says, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city." Here we see that they were making initial contacts and then presenting the gospel. The goal of this stage is evangelism that leads people to Christ. At this point, a key thing to remember is that a church is a body of Christians and not just a name or a building.

Today many churches begin by gathering a group of people who are already Christians. That is great. However, that group of people must then be trained to share the gospel and lead people to Christ if that church is going to develop a sound Biblical ministry. The Lord has given us the privilege to be used by Him to help populate heaven. Luke 15:10 tells us, "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." That same joy will become a characteristic of a church that is regularly leading people to Christ.

Stage II - Group Meetings

Acts 14:21b says, "and had taught many," or made many disciples. Here we see that Paul and Barnabas began gathering those who had placed their trust in Christ into group Bible studies so that they could begin to grow toward spiritual maturity. They followed the same pattern as the church in Jerusalem that is described in Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

New Christians grow the fastest if they are in a situation where they can get their questions answered. A group that is small enough to provide opportunity for both Bible study and fellowship provides an ideal situation for growth. If a Bible study is too large, new Christians will not ask their questions. A small group Bible study provides opportunity to ask questions, develop new friendships with individuals who are also Christians and provides opportunities for worship and to pray for one another. The goal of this stage is to help people become stable, growing Christians.

As we develop as a church, one of the goals we should have is to get every new Christian involved in a small group Bible study that will provide effective follow-up for the new Christian. In addition, we also need to understand the various types of other church meetings and their purposes. Since this verse says that they made many disciples, we need to learn about the verse that gives a Biblical definition of a disciple. These will be the subjects of later chapters.

In the planting of a new church, stage two is where we are beginning to develop the nucleus that will lead to the development of a new church. Many times church planters fail to realize the importance of developing a nucleus before trying to organize a church. Christ gave us the example by developing both the twelve and also the 120 mentioned in Acts 1:15 before establishing the church in Jerusalem.

Here in Acts 14 we see that stages one, two and three all come before the churches are organized. The original nucleus of a church sets the example for those who later become a part of that church. Paul and Barnabas show us by example the importance of developing the spiritual life of the future leaders before organizing the church.

Once a church is organized, the small group Bible study is a key to helping new Christians grow spiritually and become able to help others. That is why it is so important for a church to help every new Christian get into a small group Bible study where he can get his questions answered. This is where spiritually mature leadership has the best opportunity to begin to develop.

Stage III - Church Beginnings and Leadership Development

Acts 14:22 says, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." As we come to this stage, we see that the concern of Paul and Barnabas was to help the Christians mature and begin to develop their spiritual leadership. Today one of the problems that the entire world is facing is a lack of leadership, especially spiritual leadership.

In this verse we see that the key to the development of spiritual leadership is the development of godly character. What a person is becoming in the inner man will determine the effectiveness of that person in a leadership position. Paul and Barnabas realized the extreme importance of developing the inner character before appointing people to positions of leadership. That is just as important today as it was in the time of the early church.

As we develop as a church, one of our goals should be to strengthen the soul of each person who becomes a Christian. We also need to help every individual learn to abide in the faith. Then we need to prepare each person for much tribulation. These topics will also be the subjects of later chapters.

Stage IV - Church Organization

Acts 14:23 says, "And when they had ordained elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." We see at this stage the churches were now being organized by Paul and Barnabas. They were organized with their own leadership so that they would be prepared to carry on when Paul and Barnabas left. One mark of the effectiveness of any pastor or church planter is how well the church carries on when that person dies or moves.

One of the critical issues in any church is the development of a godly leadership team. Ephesians 4:11-16 points out the fact that God gives a spiritual leadership team to equip the saints (every Christian) for the work of the ministry so that the body of Christ may be built up and brought to spiritual maturity. When this happens, every member of the body will become a functioning part of the body who is able to speak the truth in love.

In our passage, we see that Paul and Barnabas developed this godly leadership team from among those who became Christians. Today each church has potential leaders who can be developed and equipped to train others. In fact one of the most important responsibilities of a spiritual leader is to develop other spiritual leaders to help him equip the entire body for ministry. Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."

A key priority for balanced development as a church is the development of a team ministry. We also need to understand how this team can be developed from within just as

happened in the churches mentioned in the book of Acts. In addition, we need to learn how to help that team become dependent on Christ rather than man. These topics will be the subjects of later chapters.

Stage V- Church Extension

As we go through the book of Acts, we see that Paul and Barnabas left the area of Galatia and returned to Antioch. Meanwhile the churches in Galatia were continuing to develop. By the time Paul returns with Silas in Acts 16:1-5, we see that these churches had developed and matured to the point where they were able to reproduce. God has so created life on earth that almost everything that is healthy reproduces. Otherwise the world would be lifeless in one generation.

A healthy church is a church that is reproducing. Just as God told Adam to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, God told the apostles to make disciples among every ethnic group. A healthy church will become a church in which all five stages are being continually practiced. In stage five we see that the church of Galatia became a sending church and also began developing sister churches.

Acts 16:1-3a says, "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, who was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek. Timothy was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him..." In these verses we see that the churches of Galatia now began to send one of their own out to plant churches in other parts of the world. One of the things that we notice is that Timothy was one of their best young leaders. We see that the leaders in several cities were able to testify to the effectiveness of his ministry.

We also see that there was a concern to prepare people for cross cultural ministry. Timothy was circumcised so that he could be effective among the Jews as well as the Greeks. The decrees that the apostles and elders in Jerusalem gave were shared so that the Gentiles would be able to effectively share the gospel with Jew and Jews with Gentiles. These things are mentioned for us in Acts 16:3-4 where we read, "Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those quarters; for they all knew that his father was a Greek. And as they went through all the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem."

We also see a second form of church extension in this passage. In addition to sending Timothy with Paul, the churches of Galatia were also reaching out to plant sister churches (daughter or branch churches) in the towns and villages of Galatia. Here we see that there was church multiplication. Acts 16:5 tells us, "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily."

In the final chapters of this book, we will be seeing what makes it possible for a church to mature and reproduce itself both by becoming a sending church and through the development of sister churches in nearby communities. This will happen as a church learns how to develop outreach team, prepare people for cross cultural ministry and learn to plant sister churches.

As we think of the words of Acts 1:8 we could say that: Extension is the planting of new, sound Biblical churches in each identifiable group that cannot be easily reached through the existing Biblical churches because of size of population, distance in miles or differences in ethnic, cultural or language background.

size of population - Jerusalem
distance - Judaea
ethnic or cultural differences - Samaria
language - uttermost part of the earth

May God use us to develop churches that are actively involved in all five stages of Biblical church development.

Chapter 2

Why Do Churches Die?

It was like a funeral. The church had voted to go out of existence. I had been asked to fill the pulpit as a supply speaker the next to the last Sunday before the church ceased to exist. Was this just a small church that had never had more than a few people? No! A few years earlier it had been the base for a daily Christian radio program that was heard across the nation and in several other countries. What happened?

Although I do not know what happened in that particular church, I have seen many other churches that also have ceased to exist. Why did those churches die? In this chapter we will see what happens when churches skip certain stages in their development or discontinue certain stages as they grow older. We will also see the consequences. Then we will see the Biblical remedy given to one of the churches that had discontinued certain stages as it grew older.

Skipped Stages

Today there has been much emphasis on church growth and the planting of new churches. It is exciting to see this emphasis. However, sometimes the emphasis on church growth causes churches to skip stages which are essential to a church becoming a healthy, reproducing church. Christ said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Then in Acts 2:47 we read, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Here we see that Christ placed the emphasis on building the church rather than church growth.

When a church gathers Christians who have been a part of other churches, there has been no real church growth. There has only been the transfer of members from one church to another. Such a transfer, although very important, still leaves the same number of Christians. There has been no impact on the world that Christ commissioned us to reach.

In order to build the church, there must be new converts added to the church through evangelism. A new church must either begin by evangelism or begin training its people for effective evangelism very early in its development or it will be like a house that is built with no foundation. In order for a church to be an effective, reproducing church that is pleasing to the Lord, it must be bearing fruit (John 15:1-8). That requires making contacts for the purpose of evangelism which means a reproducing church cannot skip stage one.

Many times a church will skip stage two. The church will have an effective ministry of evangelism but it will have no plan for the follow-up of new Christians. Such a church has

many decisions but no disciples. At first everything appears to be great and the church is excited. However, the church begins to notice that it has a large turnover. Many people come for a few weeks or months and then they are gone. The tragedy is the fact that most of those who have gone have become inactive.

A second thing that happens in a church with no plan of follow-up is the fact that people become Christians but never grow in their spiritual lives. They may gain knowledge but it has no impact on their daily lives. For many people, Christianity is what they do on Sunday morning. It never affects the way they live and work. As a result, their lives have no spiritual impact on the surrounding world. As we see by looking at the book of I Corinthians, such a church also has many conflicts and problems.

Stage three is a stage that is very frequently skipped by churches today. Few churches focus on the maturing of Christians and the development of godly leadership. People are often chosen for leadership because of their leadership in the world rather than for their godly lifestyle. When this happens, the church will not make an impact on the world because the world has already made its impact on the church.

In many cases two or even three of the first stages will be skipped and the church will be developed totally by transfers from other churches with the whole focus on church organization. Such a church can be organized quickly but it often fails to develop the stages that were skipped. As a result, it is like a building without a foundation. Such a church will be dependent on transfer for both its growth and its leadership. It will have no impact on the community around it.

Churches that skip one or more of the foundational stages will not even think about stage five because their whole focus will be on their own survival. They will not even think about their responsibility to develop godly leadership that is equipped to reach out and take the gospel to other places. Instead of an excitement about outreach, there will be a fear of the loss of members.

Discontinued Stages

There are churches that have developed each of the stages of Biblical church development without consciously realizing that there is a Biblical plan and order of development. This reminds us of the fact that the Lord works in spite of human ignorance and limitations. We can rejoice in that fact and thank the Lord for His working.

However, what happens without planning and is not passed on by conscious training is often discontinued. As a church grows older, it begins to take its focus off our commission to make disciples in every ethnic group. Instead of being concerned about outreach, such a church begins to turn its focus inward. The members begin to focus on their own needs instead of the need of the world around them. When this happens, a church begins to become more and more building centered.

When a church changes its focus from people to buildings, that church actually begins to

die. Now everything happens within the building. The only non-Christians who will be influenced by that church are those who choose to enter the building. Since most of the non-Christians surrounding a church building do not choose to enter that building, the church soon has little or no impact on its surrounding community.

The first stage, initial contacts, usually is dropped very quickly once a church makes its focus on having everything happen within the building. There is less emphasis on training people to know how to make contacts with people for the purpose of sharing the gospel. Instead the only thing the congregation does now is invite people to church. Then, since few respond, invitations are only occasionally given to the surrounding community until little contact is even maintained with the community.

Once a church reaches a point where few people are becoming Christians, the church sees no need for follow-up of new Christians since there are no new Christians to follow up. As a result, the church discontinues any follow-up ministry it had and stage two is no longer a part of the life of the church. It has been discontinued because people were not being reached. Then, if someone does become a Christian, a follow-up ministry is often not re-established. The new Christian is left to grow on his own.

Stage three is often discontinued because a church feels that it has enough leaders to meet its own needs. The same leaders continue year after year. No effort is made to develop new godly leadership. Gradually leaders move or die and the leadership team decreases. As the leadership team decreases, the focus and energy of the leaders become the maintenance of the building instead of the building of the body.

The Biblical Remedy

The book of Revelation describes a church that had discontinued the first stages of Biblical church development. In the book of Acts that church was a strong church. However, the Lord rebuked that church in Revelation 2:4 where we read, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Here we see that the church at Ephesus had left their first love.

Today many churches have also left their first love. The word left means to forsake or abandon. No longer is their greatest desire to please Christ. In John 14:15 Christ said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." A church shows its love for Christ by obedience to Christ. This is the thing which must become the focus or our lives and the life of the church.

The Lord gave the church at Ephesus a three part remedy to restore the church to its former life and ministry. He also warned of the consequences if they failed to do anything to change what had happened in the church at Ephesus. The same three part remedy is needed today in churches that have either skipped or discontinued some of the stages of Biblical church development. The remedy is given in Revelation 2:5 where we read, "Remember, therefore, from where thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy lampstand out of its place, except thou repent."

Here we see that the Lord gave a remedy for the church that has left its first love. We might call it the three R's needed for a church to become effective again. These three are:

1. Remember from where you are fallen
2. Repent
3. Repeat or do the first works

The first thing God told the church at Ephesus was to remember from where they had fallen. The book of Acts shows two characteristics of the church at Ephesus. Acts 19:10 says, "And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Since Asia was the region that surrounded the city of Ephesus and included many other cities, the first characteristic of the church at Ephesus was that the people were sharing the Gospel everywhere they went.

A second characteristic is found in Acts 19:17-20 where we see that the church separated themselves from the things that would separate them from their fellowship with Christ. Here we see that their desire was to be a godly people and the result was the fact that they were able to share the Gospel with the entire surrounding area. The Lord told them to remember when these were two of the characteristics of the church at Ephesus.

The second thing the Lord told the church at Ephesus to do was to repent. The word repent means to change one's mind or purpose. It means to turn from sin and to turn to God. They had left their first love. They were no longer being obedient to the commands of Christ. Now God told them to turn from their sin and become obedient to Christ again.

The third thing God told the church at Ephesus to do was to repeat or do the first works. Since the first works that are mentioned in the book of Acts are sharing the Gospel and separating from the things which hinder fellowship with Christ, God says that these are the things that are required for a continuing effective ministry. Acts 19:20 tells us the results of the earlier ministry of the church at Ephesus, "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

God gives each church a choice. A church can make the choice to do nothing. God says that the church which makes that choice will be removed. The other choice that God says a church can make is the choice to repent. Such a choice will result in effective ministry and blessing. Is your church facing this choice? The choice you make as a church will determine what results you can expect.

Chapter 3

Commissioned To Do What?

Decisions or disciples, what is our Great Commission? Our answer to this question will determine what we do in our church. It will also determine why we emphasize the things that we emphasize. Actually many churches have never really sat down to determine their purpose for existence. Instead of having a plan of action, they only react. They have never really understood what Christ commanded us to do in the Great Commission given in Matthew 28:19 -20.

Christ wants us to clearly understand His commission to us so that we can develop a plan of action that will make it possible for us to be obedient to His will. Matthew 28:129-20 says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (NAS)

In these verses we have one command that is to be carried out by three participles in the verses. The command is: **MAKE DISCIPLES**. The participles that tell how that command is to be carried out are: going; baptizing and teaching. We also see that we are to make disciples among every ethnic group since the word translated nations is the word from which we get the word ethnic. As a result, our command is to make disciples among every tribe and people group in the world. Now let's look at the three participles that tell us how to make disciples.

Going

The first participle is go or going. Here we see that as we are going, we are to make disciples. Over the years most churches have changed this participle from going to coming in their thinking. As a result, most people in churches feel that they have fulfilled their responsibility if they invite people to come to church. Since most non-Christians do not come to church, they are not likely to ever hear a clear presentation of the gospel.

Two verses in Mark help us to understand more clearly what is meant by going. In Mark 1:38 at the beginning of His ministry, Christ said to His disciples, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth." Here we see that Christ had a greater concern than just to share the gospel with those who came to Him. His concern was to go and share the good news with those who would not come to Him.

Then in Mark 16:15 at the end of His ministry, Christ said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Here we see that Christ wants us to

have the same concern that He had for every person to hear the gospel clearly. As a result, Christ commissioned us to go instead of telling the world to come.

Since Christ showed by example and taught that most evangelism is done by going, this means that we need to develop ministries that teach and equip Christians to share the gospel with people where they live and work. Paul gave us a pattern for such training when he said in Acts 20:20, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."

Here we see that the first thing Paul did was show people how to share the gospel. Paul took Christians along with him when he shared the gospel in the marketplace. Paul also took Christians along with him as he shared the gospel from house to house. In addition to showing them how to share the gospel, he also taught them what to share. He wanted to know that the Christians could explain the gospel clearly and depend on the Holy Spirit as they shared. Today we also need to show people how and what to share to make the gospel clear.

As churches, we also need to develop the structure for a ministry of going and sharing the gospel. This may be an evangelistic visitation program. It may be a plan to encourage new Christians to invite their friends to come to their homes to hear about Christ such as Matthew did when he invited both Christ and his friends to dinner in Luke 5:27-32. It may be an evangelistic home Bible study. There are many other ways also but the important thing is that a church develops a structure for a ministry of going and sharing the gospel.

Baptizing

In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, we see that the second participle is baptizing. Since there are eight different kinds of baptism in the New Testament, we need to discover which kind of baptism is mentioned here. By comparing the various passages where baptism is mentioned in Acts such as Acts 2:41, 8:38-39, 10:47-48 and others, we see that it is talking about baptism by water as a testimony of the fact that the person has placed his trust in Christ.

By comparing the eight kinds of baptism mentioned in the New Testament, we see that all eight have one thing in common. That is identification. We want to see each new Christian identify himself as a Christian by baptism. We also want to help each new Christian identify himself with a local church where he can grow spiritually. Baptizing is a part of the Great Commission because Christ has a great concern that we provide the opportunity for every Christian to identify himself with Christ and with a body of Christians where he can grow to maturity.

Teaching

The third participle in the Great Commission is teaching. Matthew 28:20a says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The word that is

translated observe is often used to speak of keeping God's commandments and so is frequently translated by the word keep. Two illustrations are John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments," and John 15:10, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." These verses make it clear that observing is being obedient to the commandments of God.

Two things are required in order for us to fulfill this part of the Great Commission. First, we must teach the Word of God so that people become familiar with the commandments of Christ. One of the greatest problems in the church today is ignorance of the Word of God. The only way that people can be taught all that Christ commanded is to teach book by book, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Christ did not tell us to pick and choose only our favorite topics. Paul said in Acts 20:27, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Second, the commandments of Christ must not just be taught, they must be obeyed. We should teach people the importance of obedience. However, even much more important, we must provide an example of obedience by our own obedience to the commandments of Christ. Paul summarized this thought in Galatians 5:13-14 where we read, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Teaching people to observe all that Christ commanded involves love for Christ that is shown by obedience and love for others that is shown by serving. We are to lead others by our obedience to Christ. Second, we are to lead others with a servant's heart. With these attitudes we will not be concerned for our own success. Instead our concern will be to develop disciples who are obedient to Christ and are serving others.

As we put all of the thoughts in these first three chapters together, we see that Christ wants every church to develop a plan of action to be obedient to Him and not just to react to problems. We might state that plan of action for a church by the following purpose statement and four objectives that explain that purpose.

Purpose Statement

Our purpose is to glorify God by making disciples and planting sound Biblical churches in each area of each country among each of the various ethnic, cultural and language groups.

Objectives

Reach

Evangelism is the proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers, resulting in their conversion to Jesus Christ, identification with Christ by baptism and with a local church where they can grow spiritually - Acts 2:38-41

Teach

Edification is the building up of the believer by promoting the spiritual growth and development of godly character through love, Bible study, fellowship, worship, prayer and ministry to one another so that the body may become mature - John 13:34-35, Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:11-13

Train

Equipping is the training of the saints so that they are equipped to do the work of evangelism, minister to one another and teach the Word of God so that the body may be built up with the result that it grows in unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ to spiritual maturity and effective ministry - Ephesians 4:11-16

Send

Extension is the planting of new, sound Biblical churches in each identifiable group which cannot be easily reached through the existing churches because of size of population, distance in miles or differences in ethnic, cultural or language background - Acts 1:8
size of population - Jerusalem
distance - Judaea
ethnic or cultural differences - Samaria
language - uttermost part of the earth

God wants to use the ministry of each church to populate heaven. God wants to use each Christian to have a part in that ministry. May we let God work through us and our churches as we work to fulfill our command to: MAKE DISCIPLES who are equipped to be a part of the body that is working to Reach, Teach, Train and Send.

Section II

Evangelism

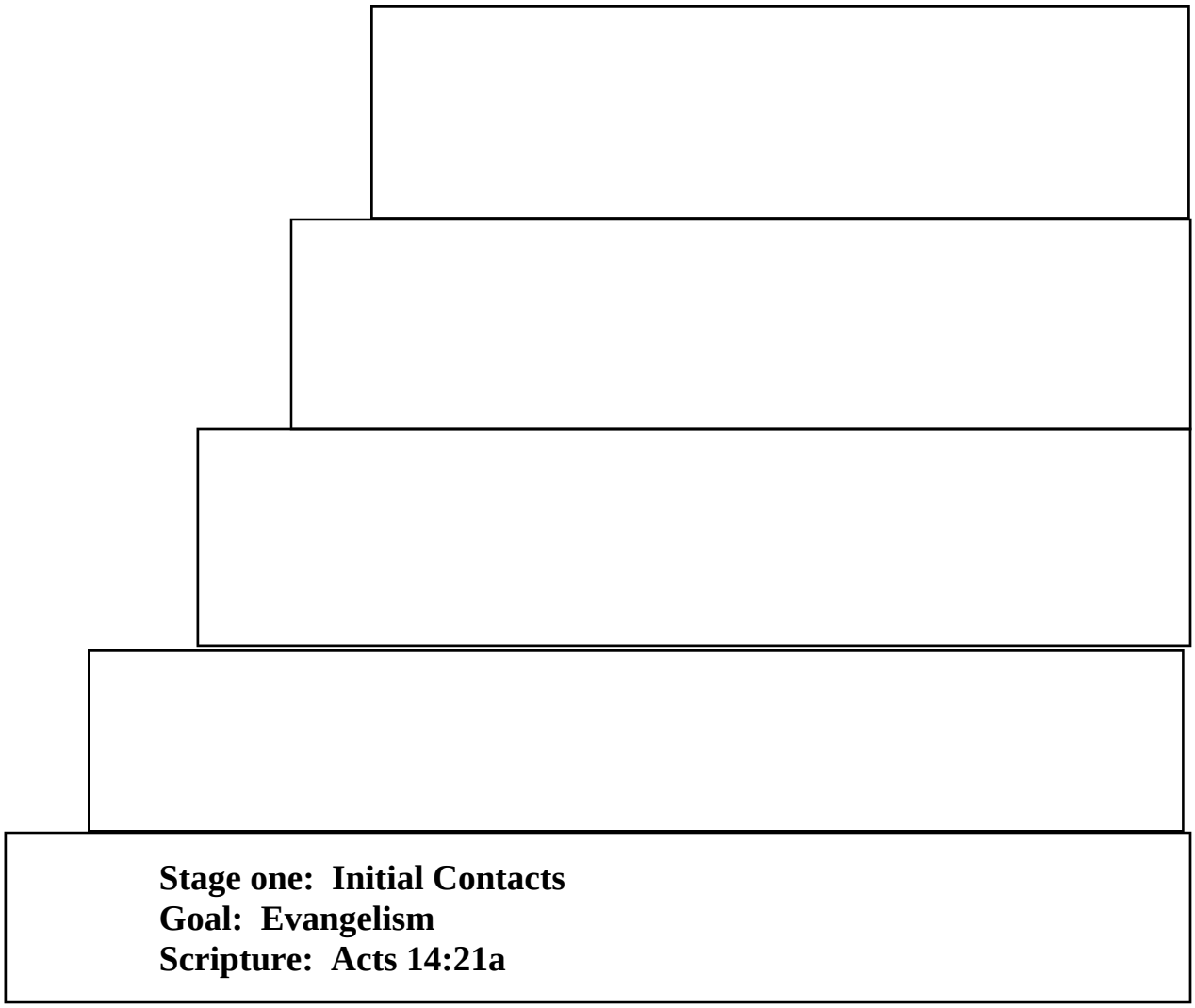
How do we reach people for Christ? Do we just wait for them to come forward in a church service? Do we forget about evangelism and try to build a church through transfers from other churches? Why don't more Christians share the Gospel with others? These are some of the questions that we will be answering in this section.

Today there is a great need for evangelism. Every day the number of people who have never heard the gospel explained clearly continues to increase. In fact the population is increasing more rapidly than most people realize. Christ has a great love and compassion for these multitudes. It is His concern that everyone at least has the opportunity to hear the gospel. Are we doing our part to give them that opportunity?

In this section we will be looking at some very important principles for effective evangelism. We will also see that evangelism is the ministry of the whole church and not just a few people. We will look at the Biblical definition of the Gospel, learn how to work with the Holy Spirit in evangelism and see what Scripture teaches about equipping every Christian to share the gospel with others.

Biblical Church Development

Each church in Acts has these five stages of development



Stage One: Initial Contacts

Jerusalem - Acts 2:1-41
Antioch - Acts 11:19-21
Galatia - Acts 14:21a
Corinth - Acts 18:1-6
Ephesus - Acts 18:24-19:7

Chapter 4

What is the Gospel that we Share?

One evening an evangelist was preaching in a church. At the conclusion of his message, he made a very interesting statement. He said, "When you leave this building tonight, no one will be able to say that you have not heard the gospel clearly presented." However, he had not presented the gospel that night. Instead he had preached about the judgment to come. That message presented a warning about judgment but the good news of the gospel was never mentioned.

To clearly understand the gospel, we must look at the passages of Scripture where the gospel is explained. The word gospel means good news. Therefore any presentation of the gospel must include good news and not just a warning of judgment. One passage that gives an excellent summary of the gospel is I Corinthians 15:1-8. In that passage we see that Paul explains the gospel that he preached and which is of first importance. The gospel focuses on the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Gospel Which Paul Preached

In I Corinthians 15:1-2 we read, Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and in which ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." In these verses Paul says four things about the Gospel that he is going to summarize. It is the Gospel which:

1. he preached
2. the Corinthians received
3. makes us stand
4. saves us

Paul gave a warning about those who preached a different gospel in Galatians 1:8 where we read, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed." We cannot stop those who preach a false gospel but we can make certain that we present the gospel clearly and in agreement with the Word of God.

The word that is translated received means to take or receive from another. Here we see that the Corinthians did not just hear the gospel. They had to make a choice to personally receive the gospel which Paul was preaching. This reminds us that the will must be active in

making the choice to receive the gospel. Receiving the gospel is not just a feeling, it is an act of the will.

Next Paul told the Corinthians that this is the gospel in which we stand. II Corinthians 1:24 says, "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand." Then Romans 14:4 says, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be held up; for God is able to make him stand." In these verses we see that we stand in the gospel, we stand by faith and we can rest in the promise that God will make us stand because we are His servants.

Paul also points out that this is the gospel by which we are saved. Through the years, many false teachers have suggested other gospels. Such gospels usually have several things in common. They place the emphasis on man's efforts. They often either add to the Bible or deny parts of the Bible. They usually deny either the deity of Christ or the humanity of Christ. They often deny either the importance of the cross and the death of Christ or they deny the resurrection of Christ. That is why it is so important to understand the gospel by which we are saved.

Christ Died for our Sins

In I Corinthians 15:3 we read, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." The word that is translated first of all means first in time, place or rank. Here we see that Paul says that of all the things that he taught, the message of the death and resurrection of Christ is the message of first importance. Nothing else that he taught was as important as this message.

If this was the message that was the most important of all of the messages that Paul shared, then it is also the most important message that we will ever share. For that reason, we should want to share this message often and share it clearly. That is why Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us that, "He gave some as ... evangelists...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." Since all Christians are saints, God gave us evangelists to equip every Christian to share the good news of the death and resurrection of Christ often and clearly.

We go on to read in I Corinthians 15:3 that this message of first importance begins with the fact that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. I Peter 2:24 says, "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed." When Christ died on the cross, He died for all of our sins. That includes our sins of the past and present as well as all sins that we will commit in the future.

This was the promise that Isaiah gave hundreds of years earlier when he prophesied in Isaiah 53:5, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." The good news

of the gospel begins with the fact that Christ died for our sins in fulfillment of God's promises in the Old and New Testaments.

The evidence of the fact that Christ died is seen by the fact that He was buried. Before Pilate would release the body of Christ for burial, he made certain that Christ was already dead. This is mentioned in Mark 15:44-45 where we read, "And Pilate marveled if he were already dead, and calling the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it from the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph."

The centurion knew that Christ was dead because John 19:33-34 tells us, "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs; But one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and immediately came there out blood and water." The separation of the blood was clear proof of death so the centurion knew that Pilate would be releasing a dead body for burial.

Christ Rose Again

In I Corinthians 15:4 we read, "And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures." The resurrection of Christ must be emphasized before we can say that we have clearly presented the gospel. In the book of Acts, the resurrection of Christ is mentioned more than twice as often as the death of Christ.

Romans 4:25 tells us, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." It was necessary for Christ to die because of our sins. It was necessary for Christ to rise again to show that the Father has declared the believer righteous.

The Father as the Judge has legally acquitted the believer by declaring the believer not guilty of sin. The Father could do this because the penalty for sin has already been paid in full by the blood of Christ. The resurrection of Christ was the proof that Christ had met the full requirements of the law. It showed that the Father was satisfied with the payment of Christ. It shows that the Father is righteous in providing a full pardon for sin to all who place their trust in Christ.

One thing that all people have in common whether they are rich or poor, young or old is the need for the forgiveness of sins. It is the hope of the forgiveness of sins that draws many people to Christ. That is why Paul said in Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The resurrection is the proof that the Father accepted the blood that Christ shed on the cross as payment in full for our sin.

Paul said that he had been sent to the Gentiles to do three things. These three things would cause the Gentiles to receive two things. Acts 26:18 says, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me." This message of forgiveness is one of the key things to share as we share the gospel with others.

A few verses later Paul shows that this is the same message that the Old Testament writers were sharing when they talked about the death and resurrection of Christ. Acts 26:22-23 tells us, "Having, therefore, obtained help from God, I continue unto this day, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." Here we see that Paul summarizes the fact that the Old Testament writers shared the good news of the death and resurrection of Christ.

I Corinthians 15:5-8 gives the proof of the resurrection. We read, "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present time, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Here we see that the proof of the resurrection was the number of eyewitnesses who saw Christ after He was raised from the dead.

More than five hundred people at one time is a lot of eyewitnesses. Most of those eyewitnesses were still alive at the time I Corinthians was written. Today we are not eyewitnesses of the resurrection but we have the privilege of being witnesses about the fact that Christ is alive. Many times we fail to be a witness about the resurrection of Christ because we do not feel qualified.

Actually none of us are qualified in ourselves including the apostles. Paul said in II Corinthians 3:5-6, "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Here we see that not a single person is qualified in himself to share the good news of the death and resurrection of Christ. In ourselves we are not worthy. However, we are not in ourselves any longer. We are in Christ. As a result, God is the one who has made us able ministers of the new covenant. The word translated able means to make competent, to qualify, to make sufficient or to make worthy. Because we are in Christ, God has qualified us and made us worthy ministers of the gospel.

One of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the gospel today is the fact that most Christians do not feel that they are qualified to share the gospel. Here we see that God says that every Christian is a qualified minister of the new covenant. Christ said in Luke 24:46-48, "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

A second great hindrance to the spread of the gospel today is the fact that most Christians have not been trained how to share the gospel. Christ showed us how to share the gospel when he spoke to some fishermen in Matthew 4:19, "And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Christ did not tell those men how to share the gospel. Instead He took them with him and <u>showed</u> them over and over how to share. We must <u>show</u> and not just tell people how to share the gospel.

Chapter 5

Have we Learned to Work with the Holy Spirit?

How many people do you know who are afraid to die? Do they ever talk about that fear of death? Do you know others who seem to have no fear of death? How can you tell if the Lord is working in the heart of a person that is not yet a Christian? If these questions have puzzled you, we trust that this chapter will give you some answers.

In I Corinthians 14:24-25 we read, "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convicted of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." In these verses we see several key factors that the Holy Spirit uses to draw unbelievers to Christ.

First, we see that the Holy Spirit works through people. We see that the verse says if "all" prophesy. The Lord wants to work through every Christian. The Lord will use us as we have a gentle and quiet spirit and are prepared to share the Word of God. I Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Second, we see that the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God. Our verse says if all "prophesy". To prophesy means to tell forth or to speak the counsel of God. It is used to speak of sharing the written Word of God. God speaks through His Word as it is shared. In Isaiah 55:9 God said, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Then verse 11 says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." God will accomplish His purpose through His Word.

The third thing we see is that the Holy Spirit convicts. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to bring conviction to the lives of those who are not yet Christians. We will see in the following pages that the Holy Spirit convicts the unbeliever of three things. In John 16:8-11 we see that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Fourth, we see that the Holy Spirit reveals the secrets of the heart. I Samuel 16:7 says, "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Then Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the conscience even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

We need to learn to work with the Holy Spirit in His ministry to unbelievers. He wants to work through all Christians. He will work through the Word of God. He will bring conviction to those who are not yet Christians. He will search the heart and reveal the secrets of the heart. Now we need to ask ourselves the question, How can the Lord work through our lives to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment?

The Holy Spirit Convicts of Sin

John 16:8-9 says, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin because they believe not on me." The word that is translated to reprove means to reprove, to convict or to convince. Here we see that the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces men of three things. In this section we will see why he convicts or convinces men of sin.The following two sections that show why he convicts or righteousness and judgment.

We see that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin because they do not believe on Christ. We begin by seeing who the Holy Spirit is convicting. The world is often used to speak of the human race or the opposition to God by the human race. Ever since Adam, people have been in opposition to God because of sin. In fact God says in Romans 8:7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be."

The word translated sin originally meant to miss the mark. It is used several different ways in the New Testament. Here it is used to speak of the controlling power of sin or the sin nature. The controlling power of the sin nature causes all men to be in opposition to God. This opposition is why the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces men. People must be drawn to Christ by the work of the Father as a result of the convicting of the Holy Spirit. John 6:44 says, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Finally we see that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin "because they believe not on me." Here we see that the one sin that keeps people out of heaven is the sin of unbelief. John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." The Holy Spirit convicts people of their sin of failing to believe and place their trust in Christ.

We work with the Holy Spirit in this conviction ministry when we share Scripture that speaks of man's rejection of Christ. Then the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to bring conviction to unbelievers and help them realize their failure to believe and place their trust in Christ. He convinces them that sin can only be forgiven through Christ.

The Holy Spirit Convicts of Righteousness

John 16:10 says, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." Here we see that the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces of righteousness or of the fact that

Jesus Christ is the Righteous One. When Christ asked John the Baptist to baptize Him at the beginning of His ministry, Christ said in Matthew 3:15, "And Jesus answering said unto him, Permit it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented to him" Christ is the one who fulfills all righteousness because He is the Righteous One.

As we come back to John 16:10, we see why it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to convince the world that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One. Christ has returned to the Father and the world cannot see Him. However, the world must be convinced that Christ is the Righteous One who was able to pay the penalty for sin. Since Christ is not present to convince the world, that is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to those who are not Christians.

We work with the Holy Spirit in this ministry of convincing the world that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One as we share what the Word of God teaches about Christ. We do not need to do the convincing because that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility is to share the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work. This is illustrated by Stephen in Acts 6:10 where we read, "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke."

Philip illustrates the same principle in Acts 8:35 where we read, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto his Jesus." In fact every sermon recorded in the book of Acts to those who are not yet Christians illustrates this same principle. As we share the good news of the death and resurrection of Christ, we are working with the Holy Spirit in His ministry of convincing the unbeliever that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One.

The Holy Spirit Convicts of Judgment

John 16 :11 says, "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Here we see that the Holy Spirit is convincing the world of the fact of judgment. God warned of coming judgment way back in the Garden of Eden when He said in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The death of Christ was like a bruise to the heel because Christ defeated death when He rose from the grave on the third day. However, the resurrection of Christ was like a blow to the head of Satan and a blow to the head is fatal.

The judgment of Satan was completed when Christ rose from the dead. He is like a person who has been convicted and is on death row just waiting for the sentence to be carried out. Revelation 20:10 tells us when the sentence will be carried out, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." The Holy Spirit convinces the unbeliever that Satan has already been judged and that his sentence will be carried out.

Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil, And deliver them who, through fear of death,

were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The death and resurrection of Christ defeated Satan and the power of death.

The Holy Spirit convinces those who are not Christians that Satan was defeated by Christ. The Holy Spirit does that through the Word of God. As the Holy Spirit convinces men of Christ's victory over Satan, the Holy Spirit also convinces men that they face a choice that has eternal consequences. They can choose to continue to follow Satan and share in his eternal judgment. However, the verse in Hebrews 2:15 points out that there is a second choice. Those who accept the payment of Christ for their sin are delivered from the fear of death that has held them in bondage throughout their lives.

As you can see, the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces the unbelievers in all three of these areas through the Word of God. Our part is to share the Word of God with love so that the Holy Spirit can do His work of convicting and convincing the unbeliever. We work with the Holy Spirit as we share scriptures regarding the need to believe on Christ, scriptures which show that Christ is the Righteous One who could pay the penalty for sin by His death and resurrection and scriptures that show that Satan has already been judged and is waiting for that judgment to be carried out. As people are convinced of these things by the Holy Spirit, they begin to realize that they are facing a choice that has eternal consequences.

Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit work through your life to convince relatives, friends, acquaintances and others of the choice that they face? The Holy Spirit wants to work through you as you share the Word of God with others. The question is, Are you available?

Chapter 6

Who is Qualified to Share the Gospel?

In Acts 8:1 we read that the Christians were scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria with the exception of the apostles. The apostles remained in Jerusalem. Since it was persecution that caused the Christians to flee from Jerusalem, we may wonder at first what happened to those early Christians. Were they filled with fear? Did fear cause them to become silent? How do people react when they suffer for their faith in Christ?

God gives us the answer to these questions. Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." Acts 11:19-21 adds, "Now they who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

Here we see several things about the spread of the early church. First, we see that it was spread by the newer Christians and not just the leaders. The apostles had stayed in Jerusalem. This meant that every Christian could be involved in the spread of the gospel and the development of new churches. One of the tragedies today is that many Christians feel that they are not qualified to share the gospel. This is the greatest barrier to the growth of the church. In the following pages we will share Biblical principles about how to change this situation.

Second, we see that the church began to spread to different cultures. In Acts 8:1 it spread to the Samaritans. Then in Acts 10 and 11 it spread to the Gentiles. The newer Christians had good news that they shared with everyone. The Lord had to convince Peter and the other apostles that the gospel was for all peoples. Often this is true today. Many times the established leadership of a church is more fearful of sharing the gospel cross-culturally than the newer Christians. If we are part of the established leadership, we need to recognize that the gospel is for all cultures and peoples and provide other Christians with an example of reaching those of other cultures.

Third, we see that these newer Christians preached the Word of God. They had been taught the Word so that they were able to share the Word with others. We also see that they shared from the Word what it taught about the Lord Jesus. Here we see that we need to teach every Christian the Word and then show them how to share the Word with others.

Could these same three things happen today? Can every Christian be equipped to share the gospel? Can we share the gospel effectively with people of other cultures? The answer to each of these three questions is yes. We will learn how as we look at the five priorities of

spiritual leadership, the meaning of a royal priesthood and bringing forth fruit that remains.

Five Priorities of Spiritual Leadership

Throughout the Bible, we see that God gives priorities for spiritual leaders. There are some things that are much more important than others. We can either be busy or we can do what is important. Just being busy does not mean that we are being effective. If we do the things that the Bible says are important, we will be effective. God summarized the five priorities for spiritual leadership through Jethro in Exodus 18:19-21.

In those verses we read, "Hearken now unto my voice; I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God. And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shall show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens."

We see that the first responsibility of a spiritual leader is to pray for the people that he is leading. If we want to see those that we lead become effective in sharing the gospel with others, the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-21 gives us an example of the kind of prayer that we should be praying. That prayer includes prayer that they would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith, that they would be rooted and grounded in love, that they would know the greatness of God, that they would know the love of Christ and that they would be filled with all the fulness of God. When those things are happening in our lives, we will be sharing the gospel with others.

The second responsibility of a spiritual leader is to teach the Word of God. The better we know the Word of God, the more effective we will be in sharing the gospel. The reason many people do not share the gospel with others is due to the fact that they do not know what to share. People who have been taught the Word have something to share. As Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere teaching the Word."

The third responsibility of a spiritual leader is to show the people the way to walk. That means that our lives as leaders must be examples of godly character. People follow our example whether it is good or bad. I Peter 3:1-6 tells us that wives who have unbelieving husbands win those husbands by their godly behavior. I Peter 3:15 tells us that godly behavior opens opportunities to witness, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

The fourth responsibility of a spiritual leader is to show people the work that they must do. People are equipped to share the gospel as we take them with us when we are sharing the gospel. Individuals learn to share the gospel as they are shown how to share by our example. Paul said in Acts 20:20-21, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the

Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul knew that people became effective in sharing the gospel as they were shown how to share.

The fifth responsibility of a spiritual leader is to share the work. Moses was told to share the work with able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. The same basic qualifications are given in Acts 6:3 where they were told to choose men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Ephesians 4:16 says that we are to equip every part of the body to work effectively and to do its share which causes the growth of the body. The greatest ministry that we can share with every Christian is the ministry of leading others to Christ.

The Meaning of a Royal Priesthood

Three times in Revelation (1:6, 5:10, 20:6) believers are called priests of God and of Christ. I Peter 2:5 says that we are a holy Priesthood while I Peter 2:9 says that we are a royal priesthood. Many Christians have no understanding of what it means to be priests of God. They have no idea that God even calls them priests. Yet these verses tell us that every Christian is a priest of God. What does that mean for the spread of the gospel?

The Old Testament priest had several important responsibilities. He offered sacrifices to God as a covering for sin. He spoke to God for the people in prayer. He spoke to the people for God as he taught the Word of God. As our Great High Priest, Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin to take away sin so that no man needs to offer sacrifices as a covering for sin any longer. However, that leaves two important responsibilities for every Christian as a priest of God and both are directly related to the spread of the gospel.

I Peter 2:5 says, "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here we see that we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God. This speaks of our ministry of prayer. We have been given the privilege of speaking to God for the salvation of relatives, friends and other individuals. We are able to do that because of the fact that we have been made a holy priesthood by the righteousness of Christ. In fact God has set us apart for that very purpose.

In addition, I John 5:14-15 gives us a wonderful promise, "And this is the confidence that we have in him that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; And if we know that he hear us whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." These verses stress the fact that as we continually ask for something to be given that is according to the will of God that we can have confidence that God will answer our requests.

Then II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Here we see that it is the will of God that people should come to repentance. As we pray continually and repeatedly for specific individuals to come to repentance, we can have confidence that one day they will come to Christ for salvation. Every Christian should discover the privilege of having a list of people for whom they are praying for

their salvation every day. Then they will have the privilege of rejoicing as they see God answering their prayers. 28

I Peter 2:9-10 says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people of his own, That ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; Who in time past were not a people but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." In these verses we see that we are a royal priesthood who has the privilege of sharing the praise of Him that has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

What does this mean? It means that every Christian has been given the privilege by God of speaking to men for God. The greater the darkness we were in before we placed out trust in Christ, the more we realize what a privilege God has given us to be able to tell others how they can be delivered out of darkness into light. As a royal priesthood, we are the sons and daughter of the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the one who has called us to share with others how they can obtain mercy and walk in His marvelous light.

Bringing Forth Fruit that Remains

In John 15:16 we read, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever ye shall ask of the father in my name, he may give it you." In this verse we see seven things involved in bringing forth fruit that remains. We see: privilege, authority, obedience, patience, productivity, follow-up and promise.

First, we see that we have been given a great privilege. We were not the ones who chose to bring forth fruit. Instead we see that it is Christ who chose us to bring forth fruit. We see that this word chosen is used three times in I Corinthians 1:27-29 where we read, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are, That no flesh should glory in his presence."

In these verses we see that God chose us because of what we are not instead of what we are. If we could boast in ourselves, it would not bring glory to God. However, God chose to work through us even though we may feel stupid, strengthless, of low birth, despised and treated as nothing or useless so that the glory of God can be revealed as He works through our lives. The next time you feel like a nobody thank God for the privilege that He chose you to work through you to bring glory to His name.

Second, we see that God has given us authority to do His work. The verse says that He has ordained or appointed us. In II Corinthians 5:19-20 we read, "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The word translated committed is the same word translated ordained in John 15:16. Here we see that Christ has appointed every Christian to be a minister of reconciliation. We have been appointed to bring people back into a right relationship with God. In fact we have been appointed ambassadors for Christ. An ambassador is one who has been given an appointment by a king or president to represent that king or president in another country. He has the authority of that king because he speaks for him as his representative. What a privilege we have to be appointed by the King of kings to speak to the world on His behalf.

Third, we see that God has told us to go. Here we see that God wants our obedience. In John 14:15 Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Then in John 15:14 He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you." In these verses we see that the way we show our love for Christ is by our obedience. We also see that as we are obedient He calls us His friends. What a privilege to be known as the friend of Christ. That is our reward as we are obedient to Him.

Fourth, as we go we are to bring forth fruit. Here we see that out ministry requires patience. Mark 4:26-29 points out the fact that there is a period of time from the planting of seed until the time of harvest. However, Psalm 126:5-6 gives us a wonderful promise about sowing the seed with patience, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." As we sow the seed of the Word of God with patience, we can look forward to the time of rejoicing at the time of harvest.

Fifth, we see that we are to bring forth fruit. Here we see that God desires productivity. Galatians 6:7-9 tells us, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Here we see that we will reap a harvest. However, God gives us a choice about the kind of harvest that we reap.

We can choose to reap corruption. We can choose to reap eternal life both for ourselves and for those with whom we share the Word of God. The choice we make in our sowing will determine the results we reap in our harvest. John 15:16 tells us that the desire of Christ is that we bring forth fruit that remains. Since the harvest will come in its own time, we need to sow the right seed and give it the proper care. We need to sow the Word of God in the strength of the Spirit. Then the Spirit will work through the Word that has been sown to draw people to Christ.

Sixth, we see that we are to bring forth fruit that remains. Here we see the principle of follow-up.. Our command in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is to make disciples not converts. Disciples are made as we show them how to follow Christ by our example, as we teach them the Word of God and as we train them how to be obedient to the commands of Christ. Again Christ has given us a tremendous privilege when He said that we are to bring forth fruit that remains because it means that He has confidence in us as we allow the Holy Spirit to work through our lives.

Finally, we see that John 15:15 concludes with a promise as Christ says, "That whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it you." This same thought is repeated in I John 5:14-15 where we read, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; And if we know that he hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Here we see that as we pray for the salvation of others and as we pray that the Lord will make our lives fruitful, we have the promise that the Father will answer our prayers.

God wants every Christian to have the privilege of sharing the gospel with others. God wants every Christian to know the joy of having God work through his or her life. If you are a spiritual leader, God has given you the privilege of equipping others for a fruitful and effective ministry. If you are not a spiritual leader, God wants you to become equipped for a fruitful and effective ministry. What a joy it is to know that the King of kings has chosen you to be His representative. Are you thanking Him each day for that great privilege?

Section III

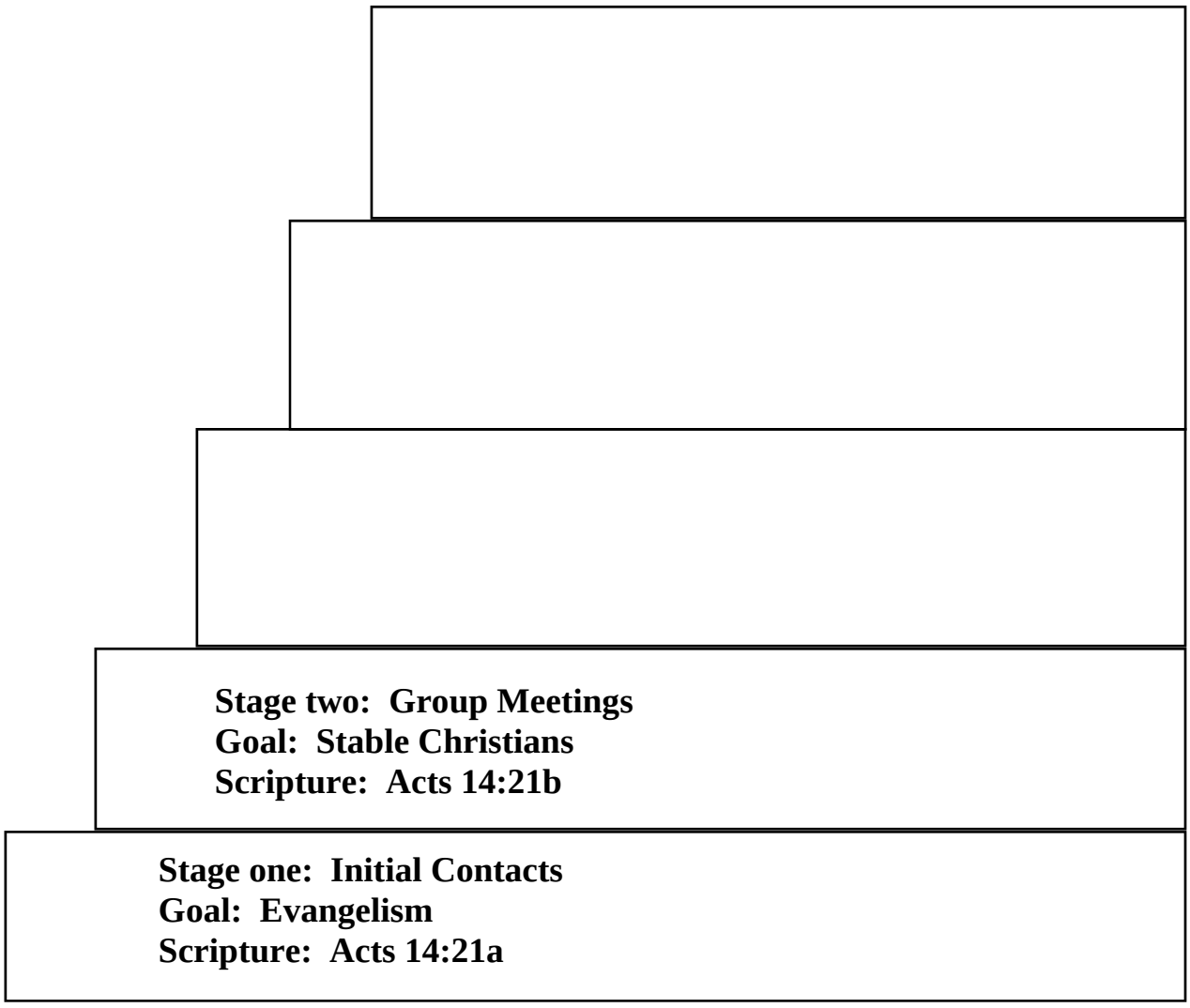
Group Meetings (Follow-up)

What would you think if some friends told you that they have a new baby and that they have set it out on the front porch to raise itself? They felt they had done their part by bringing the baby into the world. Now it was the responsibility of the baby to raise itself. Such an attitude would probably bring criminal charges of child neglect against the parents. Yet that is exactly what many churches do with those who become Christians. The new Christians are left to determine for themselves how they are supposed to grow.

The second stage of Biblical Church Development is group meetings. In this stage the goal is to help those who have become Christians develop and become stable Christians. We might call this the follow-up stage for those who have placed their trust in Christ. This is the spiritual care that is provided by the more mature Christians to help spiritual babes begin to grow properly. Acts 2:42-47 gives us some basic principles for helping new Christians grow and become disciples. In this section we will be seeing what Scripture says about the types of church meetings and their purposes, the basics of follow-up and the Biblical definition of a disciple.

Biblical Church Development

Each church in Acts has these five stages of development



Stage Two: Group Meetings

Jerusalem - Acts 2:42-47
Antioch - Acts 11:22-25
Galatia - Acts 14:21b
Corinth - Acts 18:7-8
Ephesus - Acts 19:8-9

Chapter 7

What About Meetings?

What kinds of meetings caused the early church to develop the way that it developed? Do the various kinds of meetings of a church have different purposes? How can we be effective in helping new Christians in their spiritual growth These are all very important questions if we are going to help a church be effective in its development.

The church in the book of Acts had several types of meetings in order to help the new Christians grow effectively. As a result, we can learn from the churches in Acts what types of meetings are important to help people in their spiritual growth.

These meetings are listed in Acts 2:42 and Acts 2:46 where we read, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart." In these two verses we see the three types of meetings that the early church felt were important to help Christians in their spiritual growth.

Today there is a growing tendency to emphasize one type of church meeting and to neglect the other types of church meetings. Since the various kinds of meetings have different purposes, the neglect of any type of meeting will hinder the development of Christians and slow or stop their spiritual growth. Many Christians never grow and mature properly. The result of such a lack of growth is an inability to reproduce themselves by producing spiritual children who also grow to spiritual maturity.

The New Testament teaches the various purposes of the different kinds of meetings. We need to understand those purposes if we are going to develop effective meetings. In this chapter we will learn about the following kinds of meetings and their purposes: Bible study and fellowship meetings, meetings of the whole church and one to one meetings.

Bible Study and Fellowship Meetings

Acts 2:42 describes one type of church meeting when it says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Here we see what might be called a Bible study and fellowship meeting. We see that there is a need to meet in small groups. A small group meeting together has several purposes.

The first purpose that is given in this verse is Bible study. The early Christians continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. Here we see what may be called a small group Bible study. It involves a group that is small enough so that it combines

fellowship with Bible study. Christ gives us an example of such a group when we read in Mark 3:14, "And he appointed twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach."

We see that Paul had a traveling Bible study and fellowship group that traveled with him in Acts 20:4 where we read, "And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus." On other trips Paul had even smaller groups that traveled with him providing great opportunities for Bible study and discussion. The small group provided an opportunity for these men to get their questions answered.

Today there is a real ignorance among Christians of what the Bible teaches. The early Christians grew rapidly because they were involved in small group Bible studies. The small group provides the ideal size for systematic Bible study. Such systematic Bible study through books of the Bible is very important to produce spiritual maturity because II Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Systematic Bible study is essential if our goal to is help people grow to spiritual maturity and become equipped for service.

A second purpose for Bible study and fellowship meetings is fellowship. The word "fellowship" means to share in common. I John 1:3 points out the fact that we are to share our lives with God and with one another, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." True fellowship requires that we share our lives with one another.

It is impossible to really share our lives with one another in a large group. In a small group people are able to ask their questions and share their needs. They are able to get the answers and encouragement that they need to help them in their spiritual growth. They are able to learn from the examples of the leaders many of the practical things needed to develop a godly lifestyle.

A third purpose of Bible study and fellowship meetings is the breaking of bread. The phrase "breaking of bread" is used in the New Testament both to speak of eating meals together and also to speak of the remembrance of Christ's death. In fact in the early church the two things were often combined as Christians used their meals that they were eating together to have a communion service together.

As small groups of Christians get together to study the Word and eat together, this atmosphere provides the opportunity to share many lessons that can never be shared effectively in a meeting of the whole church. A study of John chapters 13 through 15 gives an example of the impact of such a time of sharing together around the table.

A fourth purpose of Bible study and fellowship meetings is to provide the opportunity to pray for one another. In a small group many people feel free to share prayer requests that they would not share in a larger group. Smaller groups also provide the opportunity to pray for the

work of the church. Acts 12:12 gives us an example of people gathering at the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, to pray for Peter when he was in prison.

A fifth purpose of Bible study and fellowship meetings is to provide the opportunity to meet the needs of a specific group. Since Christians are at different stages of their spiritual development, they have different needs. I Peter 2:2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that ye may grow by it." Here we see that new Christians need the milk of the word in order to grow properly. A small group Bible study provides an ideal opportunity to focus on the needs of new Christians.

A sixth purpose of Bible study and fellowship meetings is to equip Christians for ministry. As the twelve traveled with Christ and as a team traveled with Paul, this provided many opportunities to teach the Scripture and give those in the group the opportunity to immediately apply what they had been taught. Since Ephesians 4:11-12 says that evangelists, pastors and teachers are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, a ministry team provides the ideal situation for effective equipping for service.

Meetings of the Whole Church

Acts 2:46 describes a second type of meeting when it says, "And they continued daily with one accord in the temple." Here we see that the church at Jerusalem was meeting in the temple. The temple provided a place where large numbers of Christians could gather together. In other cities the church also gathered together as a whole church but the groups were usually smaller. However, we see that one of the types of meetings of the church was meetings of the whole church where all of the Christians gathered together. In other cities they used a variety of different kinds of buildings.

The early church had several purposes for meeting together as a whole church. The first purpose is listed in Acts 3:1 where we read, "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." The very first purpose why the whole church gathered together was to pray together.

In Acts 4:23-24a we read, "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God in one accord." We see the results of that prayer meeting in Acts 4:31 where we read, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness."

When Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to strengthen the things that were weak in that church, he told Timothy in I Timothy 2:8, "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere , lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Paul also told the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 6:18,. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints." A strong church is a praying church and this is modeled in meetings of the whole church. We want new Christians to learn to pray.

A second purpose of meetings of the whole church is worship. I Corinthians 14:23-25 says, "If, therefore, the whole church be come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convicted of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." Here we see that one of the purposes of meetings of the whole church is to help people learn to worship God.

Christ explained the meaning of true worship when He said in John 4:23-24, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Meetings of the whole church provide an opportunity for the whole body to worship the Father together with their spirits as they worship according to truth.

The verses just mentioned in I Corinthians 14 also say, "If all prophesy." Here we see a third purpose of meetings of the whole church. Notice the difference between the word prophecy and the word prophesy. One is spelled with a c and the other is spelled with an s. The one that is used in I Corinthians 14:24 is prophesy with an s. It's primary meaning when it is spelled with an s is to speak forth the Divine counsel or to share the written Word of God. In the early church emphasis was given to the public reading of the Word of God. Timothy was told in I Timothy 4:13, "Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." The public reading of Scripture is a third purpose for meetings of the whole church.

The statement just quoted in Timothy also gives two additional purposes of meetings of the whole church. A fourth purpose is exhortation or encouragement. Hebrews 10:25 says, "Nor forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." People need encouragement. Here we see that is one of the purposes for churches gathering together.

A fifth purpose of meetings of the whole church is instruction. Timothy was told to give attention to doctrine. One of the things that upset the Jewish religious leaders was the fact that the apostles were teaching the people as they gathered together in the temple. Acts 4:1-2 says, "And as they spoke unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead."

A sixth purpose for meetings of the whole church is to develop our spiritual gifts and leadership. I Corinthians 14:26 says, "How is it, then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edification." A study of verses 23 through 33 show that typical services included much participation by all of the men. Today participation is often restricted to one or a few. This may help to account for the desperate shortage of leadership in most churches. People have become spectators instead of participants.

A seventh purpose for meetings of the whole church is for the purpose of remembering the Lord's death with a communion service. I Corinthians 11:18 says, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it." The rest of the chapter then goes on to give instructions about the communion service and the importance of personally examining our own lives as a part of the communion service.

One to One Meetings

Acts 2:46 tells us that the early Christians were also breaking bread from house to house. In Acts 20:20 Paul told the leaders of the church at Ephesus, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house." In both passages we see that there was a house to house ministry. We might call this a one to one or a family to family ministry. Since every person is different, many things must be taught in one to one Bible studies that provide the opportunity for intimate fellowship.

Paul listed two purposes for one to one meetings in Acts 20:20 that was just quoted. The first purpose of one to one fellowship is to provide the opportunity to teach lessons by example or by showing the person or family. Such things as godly attitudes, family devotions, how to study the Bible and many other lessons are best taught by example. The early Christians learned many things by example from one another as they spent time together with one another in their homes. Today many lessons also need to be learned by example.

A second purpose for one to one fellowship is to provide the opportunity to teach specific principles from Scripture. Paul felt that this was so important that he went from house to house to teach the Word of God. People feel most free to ask their questions when someone is concerned enough about them to come and share the Word of God with them individually.

A third purpose of one to one fellowship is to correct problems between Christians. Matthew 18:15 says, "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." If this principle is followed by Christians, most problems will be corrected before they bring division between Christians.

A fourth purpose of one to one fellowship is to help Christians who have been deceived by false teaching. James 5:19-20 says, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, Let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." False teaching that is affecting the life of a Christian is best corrected by a Christian who goes to that person personally and shares the Scripture with love.

A fifth purpose of one to one fellowship is to bear burdens. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Many times Christians have great burdens or spiritual problems in their lives. They need someone who will listen and care.

Christ says that this is one of the ways that we can show our love to one another.

A sixth purpose of one to one fellowship is to provide comfort. II Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God." God has comforted us and now gives us the privilege of sharing that comfort with others. Most often this will be done either to individuals or to families.

A seventh purpose of one to one fellowship is to make ourselves accountable to another Christian. James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." As Christians, we need to make ourselves accountable to one another both to avoid sin and to have victory over sin.

An eighth purpose of one to one fellowship is to provide opportunities to develop a clearer understanding of certain things in the life of a younger Christian. This is illustrated by the ministry of Aquila and Priscilla to Apollos in Acts 18:26 where we read, "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue; whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

A ninth purpose of one to one fellowship is to provide on the job training to a younger Christian as you take him with you to minister. Sometimes this will be done with one individual and sometimes with two or three. In Mark 1:17 Christ said to Peter and Andrew, "And Jesus said unto them, Come after me, and I will make you become fishers of men." One of the most effective ways to equip another Christian for ministry is to take that person with us and let him observe us as we minister.

Three different types of meetings that each have several purposes. In order for a Christian to grow most effectively, each Christian needs to be involved in all three types of meetings. If one or two of the three types of meetings are neglected, a Christian will not experience balanced growth. As a result, we need to help each Christian understand the various kinds of meetings and their purposes.

Chapter 8

What Does Follow-up Mean?

How do we follow up a new Christian and help that person begin to grow and mature in his spiritual life? Does the Bible tell us what we are to help the new Christian learn, become and do? If so, how do these things happen in the life of a new Christian? These questions are all important if our concern is to see biblical church development happen as a result of our ministry.

In chapter four we looked at **five priorities of a spiritual leader: pray for the people, teach them ordinances and laws, show them the way to walk, show them the work to do and share the work**. That list of priorities for a spiritual leader also answers the question, Does the Bible tell us what we want to help the new Christian learn, become and do? First, we want to help the new Christian learn the Word of God. Second, we want to show the new Christian by our example the way to walk. Third, we want to show the new Christian by our example the work that God wants him to do.

To effectively accomplish these things in the life of a new Christian, every new Christian needs a spiritual parent. In I Corinthians 4:15-16 Paul said, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me." In these verses Paul stressed the fact that the Corinthian believers needed fathers rather than just instructors. The same is true today.

In that day an instructor was a slave whose job it was to get a child to school so that he could be taught. The instructor had no personal concern for the total development of that child. In contrast, a father was concerned about the total development of the child. When we feel our main responsibility is just to tell people to come to church, we are showing the attitude of an instructor. When we are concerned for the total development of a new Christian whether he comes to church or not, then we are showing the concern of a spiritual parent.

I John 2:12-14 talks about various levels of spiritual development as it mentions children, young men and fathers. If Christians develop and mature properly, they will reach the spiritual maturity level of a spiritual parent. If they fail to develop properly, they will remain a spiritual toddler. Hebrews 5:12-13 says, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and have become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe."

In planting a church, if we help the first people to become Christians grow and mature in their spiritual lives, then the day will come when they can become spiritual parents and take the

responsibility for the care of a few new Christians. The more spiritual parents that develop in a church, the more effective that church will be in its total ministry. Since a parent must have at least one child in order to be a parent, a spiritual parent must have at least one person that he is helping to grow in his spiritual life in order to be a spiritual parent.

I Thessalonians 2:7-9 gives us some characteristics of a spiritual mother and then verses 10-12 gives us some characteristics of a spiritual father. Among the characteristics mentioned in those verses are: gentleness, tender love, continuous concern, a sharing of our lives, a godly example, encouragement, comfort and motivation to walk in a way that is pleasing to God. These things only happen as we spend time with a person and those attitudes are present in our own lives.

When those attitudes are present in our lives, godly character will develop in the life of the new Christian as we spend time with him. Attitudes are caught through example. The more time a new Christian spends with a godly Christian who has these attitudes, the faster these attitudes will develop in the life of the new Christian. As we spend time with a new Christian, we might summarize what we want the new Christian to learn by the word FLOCKS: fellowship, leadership development, outreach, caring knowledge, and service. We will look at each of these six areas in further detail.

Fellowship

One of the most important things that a new Christian needs to learn is the importance of fellowship. The new commandment in John 13:34-35 says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that he love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The New Testament gives thirty other one anothers (a few examples are: accept one another, admonish one another, bear one another's burdens, bear with one another, build up one another, care for one another) that we are to practice and twelve that we are to avoid. The positive one anothers can only be practiced as Christians are together.

Since the new Christian has never practiced these one anothers in his daily life, he does not even know what he is missing. (Many Christians have never practiced these one anothers either and as a result have no idea of the benefits of true Christian fellowship.) Just as the parents of a physical baby provide for the needs of that baby, spiritual parents need to help the new Christian begin to experience these one anothers by spending time with the new Christian.

Meetings of the whole church provide little or no opportunity for the new Christian to experience true Christian fellowship. Such fellowship is experienced best in Bible study and fellowship meetings or one to one meetings. Acts 2:42 says that the early Christians continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. Acts 2:46 says that the early Christians were breaking bread from house to house. The early Christians spent time together in small groups. They shared their lives with one another. The result was that the world said, "See how they love one another."

Leadership Development

Leadership development begins with day one of the new Christian's life. The reason this is true is that the primary qualification for spiritual leadership is the development of godly character. In Exodus 18:21 Moses was told to select leaders who were, "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." Acts 6:3 gives similar qualifications when it says to select, "men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." I Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:5-9 also focus on the development of godly character for those who are going to be spiritual leaders.

The development of godly character involves several things. First, it requires a basic understanding of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us from the moment of salvation. Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us that Christ died to destroy the devil, "And deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Once Adam sinned, all who have lived since that time have been in bondage to sin and fear.

At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit indwelt our lives and II Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." As Christians grow in their understanding of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they begin to realize that at each moment that they are depending on the Holy Spirit instead of their own strength that they have the power to have victory over sin, they are able to understand the love of Christ for them and they are able to exercise self discipline.

Second, godly character develops as our minds are being transformed. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Our minds are being transformed from the world's way of thinking to God's way of thinking as we hear, read, study, memorize, meditate upon and obey the Word of God.

Third, godly character develops as our emotions are controlled by the love of Christ for us. II Corinthians 5:14-15 tells us, "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead; And that he died for all, that they who live should not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." The greater our understanding of the love of Christ for us, the greater will be our capacity to show love and compassion to others.

Fourth, godly character develops as we allow the will of Christ to become the model for our will. Christ gave us the example when He said in Luke 22:42, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." As we submit our will to the will of the Father, Ephesians 3:20-21 tells us, "Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Fifth godly character develops as we learn to serve with a servant's heart. In Matthew

20:25-28 we read, "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

As new Christians grow in godly character, they are building a foundation that will provide a foundation for godly leadership. The development of that leadership will be our topic for the remainder of the book.

Outreach

One of the concerns of new Christians is for their relatives and friends who are not yet Christians. This provides an excellent opportunity to begin to train that new Christian for outreach. In Luke 5:27-29 we read, "And after these things he went forth, and saw a tax collector, named Levi; sitting at the tax office; and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of tax collectors and of others that sat down with them."

In these verses we see the first way to train a person for outreach. Teach him how to use his own home for outreach by inviting relatives and friends for a meal. Since he is a new Christian, the relatives and friends are often curious about the changes that are happening in his life. After a meal, this provides you with an ideal opportunity to share with those relatives and friends what it means to be a Christian. Two things happen in such a situation. First, the new Christian is being shown how to share the gospel with friends. Second, some of those friends will also become open to Christianity.

Such a meal may also open the door for a second way to train the new Christian for outreach. Often the opportunity will develop to begin a weekly evangelistic and follow-up Bible study in that home. This will provide a weekly opportunity to train that new Christian how to share the gospel through a home Bible study. I have found it very effective to cover Genesis 1:1-12:3 to lay a foundation for evangelism of friends and family and growth for the new Christian. Genesis 12:3 says, "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This provides a bridge to go to one of the four Gospels and use that Gospel to teach about Christ and why He came. Very often such a Bible study will begin as an evangelistic Bible study for family and friends and conclude as a follow-up Bible study for new Christians.

A third way to train a new Christian for outreach is illustrated in Matthew 4:19 when Christ said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." As a new Christian goes with you when you share the gospel with others, the new Christian is being shown how to explain the gospel. As the new Christian observes you sharing the gospel, he is learning how to share the gospel with his family and friends.

According to Acts 20:20-21 where Paul was speaking to the leaders of the church at Ephesus, this was a favored method used by Paul to train those men. Those verses say, "And

how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." In these verses we see that Paul took these men with him as he went from house to house sharing the message of repentance and faith. They were shown how to share the gospel as well as being taught other things.

Caring

One of the things that a person needs to help him in life is to have a group of people who really care for him. I Corinthians 12:25-26 says, "That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." We need to have people who care for us and show love to us at all times. However, these verses show that there are two times when we especially need that care shown to us.

First, every person really needs care shown to him when he suffers. We experience many forms of suffering: physical suffering, emotional suffering (grief, shame, fear, abandonment, loss, depression, etc.), mental suffering and spiritual suffering. In fact anything that causes pain also causes suffering. A person who is alone has no one to care for him. Many people who are not Christians have no one who really cares for them. However, as Christians we are to have the same care for one another that Christ has for us. This care is shown by the way we reach out to one another when any person suffers.

Second, every person really needs care shown to him when he is honored. He needs to experience the joy of others for what the Lord has done in his life. When we can share our exciting times with others, it makes those times even more meaningful to us. As Christians, we need to be excited about the honoring of others. Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Caring is a very important part of follow-up because it helps the new Christian begin to realize what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. In the world many people are lonely. As Christians, we can begin to help other Christians realize that they are no longer alone. They have Christ who has promised never to leave or forsake them and they have His body, the church, to show that fact in a practical way.

Knowledge

Christ wants all Christians to grow in their understanding of Him. II Peter 3:18 says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen." In order for growth in knowledge to occur, a person must become familiar with the Word of God. There are five ways that we become acquainted with the Bible.

First, we become familiar with the Word of God by hearing it. Romans 10:17 says, "So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The new Christian needs someone who will read and explain the Word of God to him. Many Christians never grow because no one takes the time to explain to them what the Bible teaches. A one to one or small group Bible study provides ideal opportunities for the new Christian to hear the Bible explained and get his questions answered.

Second, we become familiar with the Word of God by reading it. Revelation 1:3 says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is at hand." Through reading the new Christian becomes familiar with the basic teachings of Scripture. One very helpful thing to do is to encourage the new Christian to read the book of I John every day for a month. That has proved very beneficial for giving a new Christian a foundation for spiritual growth.

Third, we become familiar with the Word of God by studying it. II Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." When a new Christian begins to study the Word of God for himself, that is when he really begins to grow. Such study happens most frequently when we take time to show people how to study on their own. Many people who are high school graduates have no idea how to study. As a result, they must be shown how to study the Bible for spiritual development to happen.

Fourth, we become familiar with the Word of God by memorizing verses and especially sections of verses. Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hidden in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Verses and passages that are memorized provide one of the best ways to resist temptation. The memorization of passages of Scripture is also a key to rebuilding a mind that has been partially destroyed by alcohol, drugs or other causes.

Fifth, we become familiar with the Word of God by meditating on it. God told Joshua in Joshua 1:8, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success." Meditation is a key if we are going to learn to be obedient to the Word of God. Our thoughts and attitudes are the things which control our actions. If we are meditating of the Word of God, that Word will influence the way we act.

Service

The new Christian needs to be shown how to serve the Lord. This will happen as we take the new Christian with us as we serve the Lord. Some things are caught rather than taught. That is why Christ told some fishermen in Matthew 4:19, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." The only thing Christ asked those men to do was follow Him. Christ knew that as they followed Him, they would develop the same concern for other that He had. Christ also knew that when He went back to heaven that the disciples would do what they had seen Him do.

Two different words are used to talk about our service. Galatians 5:13 says, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." The word that is used here means to serve as a slave and talks about the service of a slave to his master. When Christ died on the cross, He shed His own blood to purchase us and set us free from our slavery to sin.

The price one pays for something shows how much that thing is worth. Since Christ gave His life which has unlimited value, Christ placed that value on us to purchase our salvation. That means that Christ says our life has more value than everything in the world because He placed that value on us. Now Christ says that He has given us freedom to respond to that love. One of the ways that we are able to respond to that love is to show our love for Christ by serving one another. As we serve Christ in this way, we are expressing our thanks to Him for the love that He has shown to us.

The other word that is used to talk about our service is found in I Peter 4:10-11 where we read, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Comparing this passage with Romans 12:3-8 and others, we see that Christ has placed the Holy Spirit within us and the Holy Spirit has given us one or more spiritual gifts. The word that is translated serve or minister here means that we are to use our spiritual gifts to serve one another. However, we are to do that through the strength that God gives and not through our own strength.

The spiritual gifts that were given to us by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation are only effective as we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit and not our own strength. We were given those gifts because God has a special service or ministry for every Christian. II Corinthians 3:5-6 tells us how we carry out our ministry, "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Today many Christians misuse their spiritual gifts and use them to destroy. Instead we need to learn how to use our spiritual gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit because then we will have an effective service that brings life. The new Christian needs to be taught about spiritual gifts and how to use those gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit and not misuse then by depending on his own strength. Every Christian has spiritual gifts that were given at the moment of salvation. Every Christian needs to learn how to use those gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That means we are to do two things in the area of service as we follow-up new Christians. We are to teach them what the Bible says about spiritual gifts. Second, we are to show by our example how to submit to the Holy Spirit so that He is able to work through our

lives. Example is the only way this can be communicated because submission is an attitude that is caught not taught.

Follow-up is very important if new Christians are going to be helped to grow and mature. In fact, many people who have been Christians for a long time also need follow-up because they have failed to grow properly in their spiritual lives. Hebrews 5:11-14 and I Corinthians 3:1-3 tell us that people remain spiritual babes (toddlers) when they fail to grow properly. Such individuals all need spiritual parents who are able to develop a FLOCKS follow -up ministry with them. Are you available to God to be such a spiritual parent?

Chapter 9

What is a Disciple?

How can we know when a person has become a disciple? Does the Bible give us a definition of a disciple? If so, what does it say? We will be looking at the answers to these and other questions as we continue our study. Since our command is to make disciples, we can expect Christ to describe what a disciple is like. That is exactly what He did.

In Matthew 13:52 we read, "Then said he unto then, Therefore, every scribe who is instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." The word who is instructed is the same word that is translated "make disciples" in Matthew 28:19. Another way we could say it is, "Who has become a disciple" (NAS). In this verse we see that five characteristics of a disciple are given.

A disciple is a person who knows the Word (a scribe); is the head of a spiritual household (a householder); has a treasure; a learner who shares what he learns (brings forth out of his treasure things new); shares basic truths (brings forth things old). By looking at these characteristics, we see that a disciple is one who is able to give and help others and not just receive.

A Person who Knows the Word

The first characteristic of a disciple is a scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is a title that is used by Christ to describe the rule of God over the earth. In the time of Christ there were many scribes who saw the job of copying books of the Old Testament as just a profession so Christ wanted us to know that a disciple is one who is like a certain kind of scribe. As a result, this verse is talking about a scribe who has placed his trust in Christ and submitted his life to the rule of God.

A person will never become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven until he has placed his trust in Christ. Today there are many people who call themselves Christians but they give no evidence of that fact by their lives. In II Corinthians 13:5 Paul said, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Know ye not yourselves how Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are discredited?"

Once a person becomes a Christian, it takes time for that person to grow and mature. Part of that growth to spiritual maturity is becoming a person who practices the Word. I John 2:14 says, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

The New Testament speaks of several levels of spiritual maturity: new born babes, children without the ability to speak clearly (toddlers), children, young men, spiritual parents and older men and women. Here we see that one of the characteristics of a spiritual young man is that the Word of God abides in him. Having the Word of God abide in us involves three things. When the Word abides in us, it is in our thoughts, controls our attitudes and determines our actions.

Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us why we need the Word of God in our thoughts, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The thoughts and ways of God are much different than the thoughts and ways of men. The more we think the thoughts of God by meditating on His Word, the greater the impact it will have on our lives.

Our thoughts develop our attitudes. This is illustrated so well by Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25, "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them." Since Paul says at least five times in other passages that he viewed himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, his thoughts controlled his attitudes. He had an inner attitude of peace and joy even in suffering.

This passage also illustrates the fact that when the Word of God abides in us, it not only is in our thoughts and controlling our attitudes, it also determines our actions. Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises. Since they had been beaten and put in stocks, they only thing that made it possible for them to sing praises was the fact that they were able to see their situation from God's viewpoint. Our goal is also to develop disciples who have the Word of God abiding in them.

Head of a Spiritual Household

The second characteristic of a disciple is the fact that he is a householder or the head of a spiritual household. In order to be the head of a spiritual household, a person must have one or more spiritual children. Aquila and Priscilla illustrate the ministry of spiritual parents by their ministry to Apollos in Acts 18:26b, "They took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

The word that is translated "took unto" means to take to oneself and speaks of a special interest on the part of the person who is receiving the other. Aquila and Priscilla took a special interest in the spiritual growth and development of Apollos. That special interest in the spiritual growth of Apollos had a great impact on his life. This is illustrated in the following two verses, Acts 18:27-28 which say, "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; who, when he was come, helped them much who had believed through grace; For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

Today one of the greatest weaknesses in most churches is the fact that few Christians are taking a special interest in the spiritual growth and development of a new Christian. Often new Christians are left to try and figure out how to grow on their own. The result is that many Christians struggle for years with little or no spiritual growth. A disciple is one who is helping one or more Christians in their spiritual growth by spending time with them to answer their questions and encourage them in their struggles.

Has a Treasure

The third characteristic of a disciple is the fact that he has a treasure. To help us understand what is meant by a treasure, Matthew 12:35 says, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man our of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Our treasure is what controls our heart. That treasure can be either good or evil. However, since Matthew 13:52 is talking about a disciple of the kingdom of heaven, it is talking about one who has a good treasure.

Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hidden in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." If the Word of God is the treasure that is controlling our heart, it will do several things for us. In this verse we see that the Word of God is one of the things that helps to keep us from sinning.

The verse that we just quoted in Matthew 12:35 says that our treasure is what determines our character. What we are on the inside will also control our words and our actions. That is why it is important that the treasure which controls our hearts is the Word of God. If the Word of God is controlling our hearts, it will also cause us to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit and not our own strength. II Corinthians 4:7 says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

A Learner who Shares what he Learns

The fourth characteristic of a disciple is the fact that he brings forth out of his treasure things that are new. Here we see that a disciples is one who is continuing to learn new things from the Word of God. God is looking for leaders who have a learner's heart. Such a person is not satisfied with what he already knows, he expects God to teach him new things each day.

The word that is translated new speaks of something that is new in quality. It speaks of something that is improved or better. A learner is one who wants to continually improve his understanding of the Word of God. Colossians 2:3 says of Christ, "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." A disciple is one who is growing in his knowledge of Christ and His Word.

However, we see that a disciple with a learner's attitude does not just keep what he learns to himself. Instead he brings out of his treasure the things that are new. What he learns,

he also shares with others so that they can also grow. Our treasure is more useful when it is shared with others. A Biblical principle that is mentioned many times is the fact that we gain by sharing or giving to others the things that God has given to us.

Shares Basic Truths

The fifth characteristic of a disciple is the fact that he brings forth out of his treasure things that are old. Here we see that a disciple is one who is able to share the basic teachings of the Word of God. These basic teachings should include at least two things. First, a disciple should be able to share the basic teachings that can lead a person to a clear understanding of salvation. Second, a disciple should be able to share the basic teachings which will help a new Christian begin to grow.

Paul tells us how he equipped people to do these two things in Acts 20:20-21 where we read, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you, publicly, and from house to house. Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul equipped people to share the message of salvation by teaching them publicly and then showing them how to share that message as he took them with him from house to house. Many times we just try to teach people how to share the gospel. Such teaching is good, but it is incomplete. Most people will only become effective at sharing the gospel as they are shown many times how to share the message of salvation. Instead of just showing them once or twice, Paul took them with him from house to house so that they were shown many times how to share the gospel.

Paul also showed people how to help new Christians in their new life in Christ as he showed them house to house how to help new Christians grow in their faith in Christ. Paul said in I Thessalonians 2:11-12, "As ye know how we exhorted and encouraged and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." Paul realized the importance of sharing with each one just as a father does with each of his children. He wanted to equip other Christians to carry on this important ministry after he left.

Today there is a great weakness in house to house ministry both with those who are not yet Christians and also with those who are Christians. As you take Christians with you in house to house ministry, they will be shown how to share both the basic teachings about salvation and the basic teachings to help new Christians grow.

One very excellent way to show a Christian how to help the new Christian with the basic teachings for spiritual growth is to take the Christian you are training along with you as you teach the new Christian and his family the book of I John over a period of weeks. The book of I John is a key book in helping the new Christian to understand his relationship with God and with other Christians. By showing a disciple how to teach the book of I John to a new Christian and his family, you are equipping that disciple to share many of the basic teachings

that will help a new Christian in his spiritual growth. He also learns to answer the questions that are commonly asked by new Christians. He is also discovering the joy of being a spiritual parent as he sees the new Christian grow.

Perhaps as you have been studying these five Biblical characteristics of a disciple, it has been causing you to do some evaluating of your own spiritual life. Are these five characteristics true in your own life? If so, have you committed yourself to obedience to the command of Christ to "make disciples" by helping another Christian develop these five characteristics in his or her life? If you are committed to obedience to the command of Christ to "make disciples", you will have the joy of seeing your ministry multiplied through the lives of others. Maintenance, addition or multiplication, which of these three words best describes your ministry for Christ?

Section IV

Maturing
(Leadership Development)

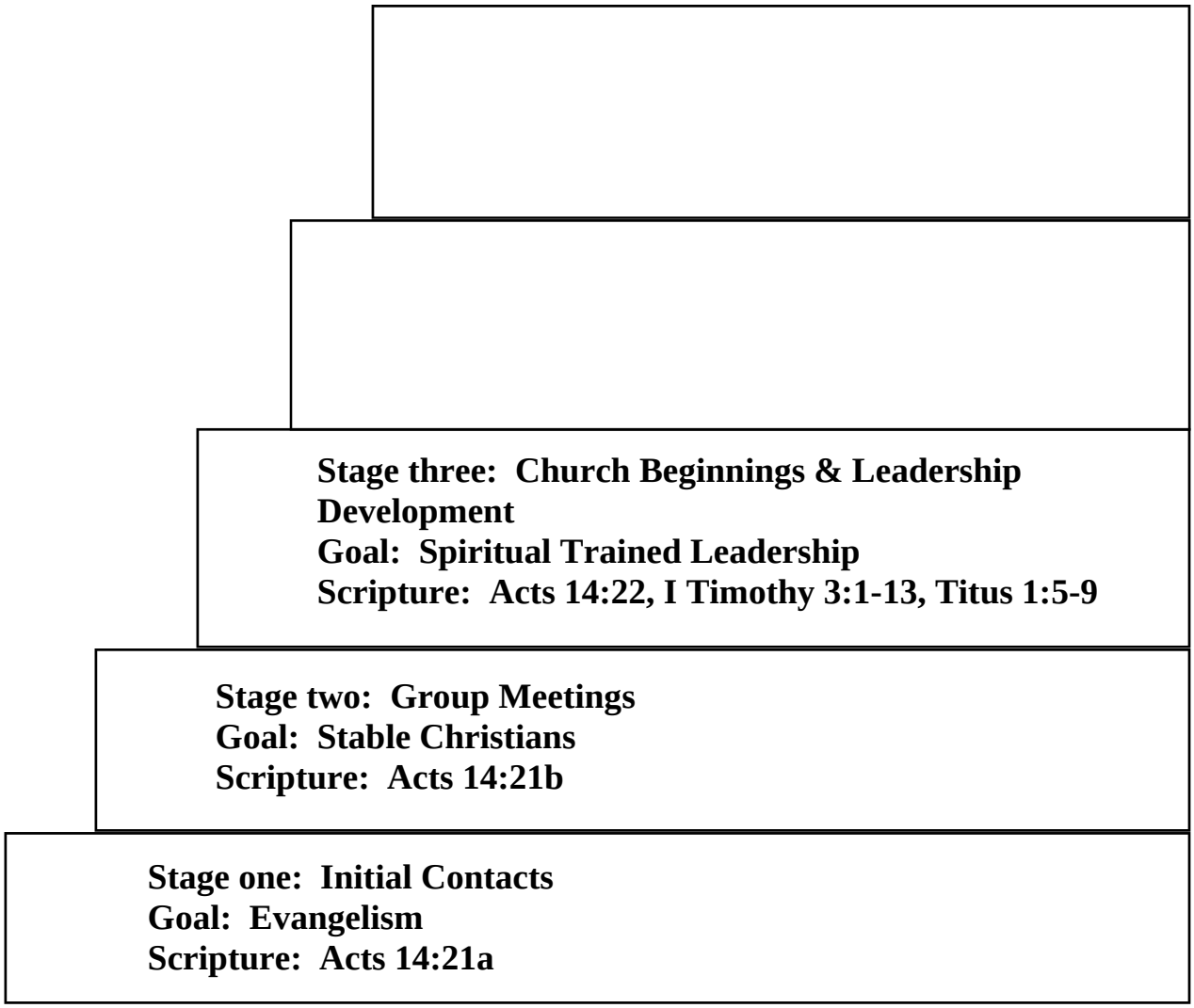
How does Christian leadership differ from leadership in the world? Why not just take those who are leaders in the world and appoint them as leaders in the church? Today many churches have done just that and the result has been that those churches have become so much like the world that they are having no impact on the world around them. How do we develop Biblical leadership that will have a real impact in the world?

God does teach us many lessons about the development of godly leadership. In this section we will be looking at some of those lessons as we see some of the things that God uses to develop the godly character needed to produce leaders who are making an impact for Christ.

The third stage of Biblical Church Development is church beginnings and leadership development. Since we want to develop churches that will be able to multiply and make a real impact for Christ, careful attention must be given to the development of the leaders who will lead that church. Paul gave us an example in Acts 14:22 where we read that he spent time, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." In this section we will learn three things that God uses to develop godly leadership: strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging the disciples to abide in the faith and preparing the disciples for much tribulation (affliction).

Biblical Church Development

Each church in Acts has these five stages of development



Stage Three: Church Beginning & Leadership Development

Jerusalem - Acts 3:1-5:42
Antioch - Acts 11:26
Galatia - Acts 14:22
Corinth - Acts 18:9-11
Ephesus - Acts 19:10

Chapter 10

Strengthening the Souls of the Disciples

Why did Christ spend three years training His disciples? Why did Paul spend ten years in Tarsus before the Lord led Barnabas to bring him to Antioch to share in the leadership of the church there? How does Christ develop godly character in the lives of Christians? What does it mean to strengthen the souls of the disciples? These are some of the questions that will be answered as we study this chapter.

In stage two, our purpose is to help Christians grow and become strong in spirit. Now as we come to stage three, we see that we are working to strengthen the soul. In the world, people try to change others from the outside with the goal of helping them change on the inside. In contrast, the Lord begins at the inside and works out. Let us see what has happened in the first two stages.

Stage one is initial contacts and our goal is evangelism. Our purpose during stage one is to help individuals come to a clear understanding of the gospel so that they can put their trust in Christ. At the moment of salvation, a person is born of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes into the human spirit and we now have the Holy Spirit living in our spirit. Ephesians 1:14 says that is God's down payment and guarantee of our eternal life.

Stage two is group meetings and our goal is to develop stable Christians. During this stage we want to help new Christians grow and become strong in spirit. Luke 1:80 says of John the Baptist, "And the child grew, and became strong in spirit." The word translated strong is also used in Ephesians 3:16 where Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

God wants people to be born of the Spirit. Then God wants them to become strong in spirit. Now as we come to stage three, the stage we have called church beginnings and leadership development, we see that the goal is spiritual trained leadership. Notice that the goal is not just leadership or even trained leadership but spiritual trained leadership. To develop spiritual trained leadership we must strengthen the souls of the disciples. In this chapter we will see the changes which happen through strengthening the soul, the people or things which God uses to strengthen us and the results of a strengthening ministry.

Changes Which Happen Through Strengthening the Soul

The soul includes our mind, emotions and will. Acts 14:22 begins, "Confirming the souls of the disciples." Here we see that Paul and Barnabas realized the importance of confirming or strengthening the souls of the disciples. This strengthening involves each part of

the soul. This strengthening is vital if we are going to develop spiritual trained leadership to lead the church.

Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." In the world, leadership is based on what benefits the leader. A business is operated to make money for the owner. In government, the desire of leaders is to be able to exercise power. In other leadership situations, the leader wants control or some other thing that will benefit himself.

As our mind is being transformed, we are developing spiritual vision and thinking which agree with the mind of God. Instead of asking how to be successful, we will begin to ask how we can most effectively serve others. Instead of being concerned about what will benefit ourselves, we become concerned about what will benefit others. Humility will replace pride. These godly attitudes are essential for effective spiritual leadership.

Second, the emotions must also be transformed for effective spiritual leadership. When Adam sinned, one of the emotions that took control in his life was fear. That emotion has controlled leadership ever since. This is easily seen as we see how political leaders relate to each other.

However, I John 4:18 says, There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." As we focus our thoughts on the love that Christ showed to us, that love begins to change the fear that has controlled us. Christ said that love for Christ will produce obedience to Christ. John 14:15 says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

The commandment which best summarizes all of the commandments of Christ is found in John 13:34-35 where we read, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Having love rather than fear as the thing which controls us will completely change our style of leadership.

Paul describes the change that will happen in our leadership if we are controlled by love instead of fear in II Corinthians 5:14-15 when he said, "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead; And that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

Leadership that is controlled by love instead of fear will be leadership that is consciously choosing to live for Christ seven days a week rather than living for self. A team of leaders who show that love seven days a week will have a powerful impact on the lives of those where they work, where they live and those that they contact through daily activities. They will also have a great impact on other Christians.

Third, the will must also be transformed for effective spiritual leadership. Christ

showed us what a transformed will is like when He said in Luke 22:42, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." When a team of leaders commits itself to learning and doing the will of God, that team will have tremendous unity.

Another characteristic of a leadership team committed to learning and doing the will of God is much prayer. This is illustrated by the leadership team in Antioch. Acts 13:2-3 tells us, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed they sent them away." As they prayed, God spoke to them and they were obedient.

Persons or Things Which God Uses to Strengthen Us

God uses many people and things to strengthen us in our souls. We would like to look at seven of the most important things that God uses to establish us or strengthen our souls. First, Christ and the Father strengthen us. II Thessalonians 2:16-17 says, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work." Then II Thessalonians 3:3 adds, "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil."

Second, God uses the ministry of other Christians to establish and strengthen us. I Thessalonians 3:2 says, "And sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you, concerning your faith." Just as the Lord had used Paul to strengthen the Thessalonians, Paul now sent Timothy to have the same ministry among them.

Third, God uses the preaching and teaching of the Word to strengthen and confirm us. Acts 15:32 says, "And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them." II Peter 1:12 also emphasizes this thought when it says, "Wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth."

Fourth, God uses our prayers and the prayers of others to strengthen us. As Paul prayed for the Romans, he knew that God would establish them. Romans 16:25 says, "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began." Paul realized the power of prayer to strengthen Christians.

Fifth, God uses the spiritual gifts of other Christians to strengthen and establish us. Paul said in Romans 1:11-12, "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end that ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." Paul realized that his spiritual gifts would strengthen the Romans. He also realized that the spiritual gifts of the Romans would strengthen him.

Sixth, God uses suffering to strengthen us. I Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." We do not enjoy suffering. However, we realize that God uses that suffering to strengthen us. As a result, we see that suffering benefits our spiritual growth and development.

Seventh, God uses the lessons learned from our failures to strengthen us. This is best illustrated in Luke 22:31-34 where we read, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; But I have prayed for you, that thy faith fail not. And when you are turned about, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." That failure was used by God to help Peter realize that he must depend on the Lord and not on his own strength.

We all have to learn as Peter did that we will fail when we depend on our own strength. Through failure we learn to humble ourselves and depend on Christ for strength instead of depending on ourselves. Then we can echo the words of Paul in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things though Christ, who strengtheneth me."

Results of a Strengthening Ministry

The result of a strengthening ministry is that it develops a totally different style of leadership. As we humble ourselves and learn to depend on Christ for strength instead of ourselves, we learn to lead as Christ led instead of leading as the world leads. The total difference in these two styles of leadership was explained by Christ. Mark 10:42-45 tells us, "But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you, but whosoever would be great among you, shall be your minister. And whosoever of you would be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The world depends on authority and worldly power for leadership. **Christ said godly leadership will have four characteristics. First, godly leadership will be controlled by the desire to serve others. Second, godly leadership will put that desire into action by becoming the servant of all. A servant has a desire to help others become successful instead of being concerned about making himself successful. Third, godly leadership will be motivated by the desire to serve rather than be served. Fourth, godly leadership will follow the example of Christ who gave His life for others instead of expecting to receive.**

When our goal is to develop godly spiritual leadership, we see Christians develop who will have the same attitudes that Christ had both toward the world and toward other Christians. First we see the attitude that Christ had toward the people of the world. That attitude is shown in Matthew 9:36-38 where we read, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with

compassion on them, because they were faint, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Godly leadership will have a real compassion for the lost, will be people of prayer and will become laborers who are working in the harvest field to reach the lost for Christ.

Christ also tells us the attitude that godly leaders will have toward other Christians in the verses already quoted from John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Godly leaders will be known for their love for other Christians. Since the congregation follows the example of the leadership, godly leaders will lead the entire congregation by example and the church will be known for its love and oneness.

As you evaluate your own leadership, perhaps it would be good to ask yourself the following questions. Am I controlled by a servant's heart that causes me to serve others and help them become godly leaders? Do I have a heart of compassion that causes me to regularly share the gospel with the lost? Do I have a heart of love that causes me to love others as Christ loves me? Your answers to these questions will determine whether you are a godly leader who is developing other godly leaders.

Chapter 11

Abiding in the Faith

What does it mean to abide in the faith? Why is abiding in the faith important in the development of godly leadership? Can godly leaders expect God to work in their lives as they abide in the faith? As God works in their lives, can godly leaders expect God to work through their lives? These questions are some of the questions that will be answered as we study this chapter.

In Acts 14:22b we read, "Exhorting them to continue in the faith." The word translated exhort is used two main ways in the New Testament. It is often translated by the word beseech or a similar word and means to call to one's aid. Here and in many other places it is translated by the word to exhort and means to urge a person or a group of people to do a certain thing. Here Paul was urging the Christians to continue in the faith.

The word to continue means to continue or to abide and is usually translated by the word abide. The word translated the faith means what is believed. To have faith means to have a firm persuasion that the Word of God is truth, to make a personal surrender to Christ based on that truth and then to walk by faith. To walk by faith means that our actions will show that our surrender to Christ has given us a great desire to be obedient to Him. As a result, we see that Paul was urging the Christians to continue in the faith and show by their obedience the results of surrendering their lives to Christ.

To abide in the faith, we must make certain choices in our lives. We choose to learn the Word of God and obey it. We choose to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. We choose to abide in Christ. Each of these choices is essential if we want to abide in the faith.

Abiding in the Faith and the Word of God

Christian leaders must be committed to truth if they want to be godly leaders. John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them through the truth; the word is truth." In this verse Christ was praying for His disciples the night before He was crucified. Christ knew that if the disciples were going to make an impact on the world, they had to be sanctified through the truth of the Word of God. In order to abide in the faith, we choose to make it our priority in life to know God, to know His Word and to be obedient to that Word.

In I John 2:13-14 we see that the characteristic of a spiritual father is that He knows God. Both verses begin, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." Anytime God repeats something twice, it means that He is trying to emphasize it

because it is extremely important. That means that if we are going to develop a Biblical leadership team in a church, we must make it our goal to help leadership develop which has a desire to know God.

Today there is an emphasis in many churches on the development of methods that will attract people instead of focusing on the development of leadership that has a desire to know God and reproduce themselves in the lives of others. Christians who have a desire to know God will become spiritual parents. They will be multiplying themselves as they help other Christians grow and reproduce themselves.

This was the key that caused great growth in the early church. Acts 6:7 says, "And the word of God increased, and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Then Acts 9:31 says, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit were multiplied." When people learn to walk in the fear of the Lord, the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God is increasing, first the number of disciples will multiply and then the number of churches will multiply.

To really get to know God, we must commit ourselves to learning the Word of God and then being obedient to it. Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." God told Joshua in Joshua 1:8, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

In these verses we see that people who commit themselves to studying the Word of God, meditating on the Word of God and then obeying the Word of God can expect certain results. God says that they will not be ashamed. God also promises to make their way prosperous. Then they will have good success in the eyes of God. It is more important for us to have good success in the eyes of God than in the eyes of men.

The Bible is our method book as well as our message book. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For my thought are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The thoughts and ways of God are much greater than our thoughts and ways. As we learn His thoughts and learn to follow His ways, we will accomplish His work in His way.

Christ explains why this happens in John 8:31-32 where we read, "Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue (abide) in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Before we became Christians, we were in bondage to sin, we were spiritually blind and we were walking in darkness. Now we have been set free from the power of sin, we have been given spiritual sight and we are called to walk in the light. As spiritual leaders and other Christians learn the truth

and then begin to walk in it, they experience tremendous freedom. That freedom is one of the things that God uses to draw people who are still in spiritual bondage to Christ.

Abiding in the Faith and Walking in the Spirit

As the truth sets us free, one of the things that we need to learn to be a godly leader is to learn how to walk in the Spirit. Paul realized the very real danger of being controlled by the rules of men instead of learning to walk in the Spirit. He gave this warning in Galatians 5:1. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Galatians 5 goes on to give us several principles about walking in the Spirit that are very important if we are going to be effective godly leaders.

Galatians 5:13 says, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." As the truth sets us free, it does not free us to please ourselves. Instead the truth sets us free to serve one another in love by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what gives us purpose in life and causes us to feel useful instead of useless.

As II Timothy 2:21 says, "If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and fit for the master's use and prepared unto every good work." Many people ask the question, Why am I here or why was I born? This verse says that the godly person has been given four promises that are the result of having the freedom to serve one another in love. Christ says that we will be a person unto honor, a person set apart for God, a person who is useful to the Master and a person who has been prepared for every good work.

Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The word walk talks about all of our activities in our lives each day. Here we see that we are to depend on the power of the Spirit instead of our own strength for every activity of every day. As we depend on the power of the Spirit, we are told that we will not fulfill the evil desires of the flesh. Here we see that abiding in the faith will give us the strength to be an example for others of what it means to follow Christ. This is how we lead by example.

Galatians 5:18 says, "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Here we have a very important promise. A godly leader who has learned to be led by the Spirit has also learned what it means to be free in Christ. As a result, he leads others instead of driving them. Shepherds either lead sheep or drive sheep. The same is true of leaders. They either lead people or they drive people. One difference between leadership and godly leadership is this style of leadership. Godly leaders lead people instead of driving them or trying to control them by rules.

Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law." Here we see that as we walk in the Spirit that our lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit. We do not produce the fruit of the Spirit by our own efforts. Instead we submit to the Spirit and the Spirit produces the fruit in our lives.

Abiding in the Faith and Abiding in Christ

One of the keys to learning to abide in the faith is to learn to abide in Christ. One of the things that was true before we became a Christian is that we depended on ourselves. In John 15 Christ taught the disciples the need to abide in Him. In fact Christ compared our relationship to Him to that of a vine and its branches. The vine is the source of life and provides everything that the branches need. The branches must continually depend on the vine for everything. The same thing is true for us. We need to learn to depend on Christ for everything instead of trying to do things in our own strength.

Christ gives us several promises in John 15 about what will happen in our lives as we learn to depend on Him for everything. First, verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 16 all promise us that if we abide in Christ that we will bear fruit. The word that is translated to bear or bring forth fruit is used seven times in this chapter. As we abide in Christ, our lives will bear fruit, more fruit and much fruit. To abide in Christ means to confess all known sin, to share every part of our life with Christ, to bring all our burdens to Him, to depend on Him for wisdom, strength and life and not allow anything to separate us from Him. As we share our lives with Christ, we can expect Him to produce fruit through our lives.

Second, Christ promises us that we will have answered prayer as we abide in Him. John 15:7 says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Then verse 16 adds, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." As we consciously depend on Christ and bring our requests to Him, we can trust Him to answer our prayers.

Third, Christ says that we bring glory to the Father as we abide in Him and bring forth fruit. John 15:8 says, "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Our greatest desire in life should be to bring glory to God. One of the ways that we bring glory to the Father is to abide in Christ and bear much fruit.

Fourth, Christ assures us that we will abide in His love if we keep His commandments. John 15:10 says, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." The love of Christ for us never changes. However, we are more aware of that love as we keep His commandments because perfect love casts our fear. As we are obedient to Christ, the fear is removed.

Fifth, we will be filled with joy as we abide in Christ. John 15:11 says, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Christ wants us to experience joy as a continuous part of our lives. He wants that joy to be a full joy. Christ says that this is what will happen as we abide in Him.

Sixth, as we abide in Christ, we are able to fulfill the commandment to love one another as Christ loved us. In John 15:12 and 17 we read, "This is my commandment that ye love one

another, as I have loved you." This love is not based on our own efforts. Instead it is the result of abiding in Christ and allowing His love to control our lives so that others experience His love flowing through us.

Seventh, Christ says that we will be His friends as we abide in Him. John 15:13, 14 says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you." Friends are one of the most important things in our lives. Here we see that Christ chooses each Christian to be His friend. We will enjoy that friendship as we abide in Him.

Eighth, Christ says that because we are His friends that we will know God's plans. John 15:15 says, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you." One of the reasons why we study the Bible is to know the plans of God. The more we know about the plans of God, the greater will be our opportunity to be a part of carrying out those plans. This is one of the things that helps to give real meaning and purpose to our lives. It also helps us to be effective in leading others because we are leading them to carry out the plans of God instead of our plans.

Ninth, Christ has chosen us and appointed us to bring forth fruit that remains. John 15:16 says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." As we abide in Christ, our lives will be fruitful. In addition, Christ says that our fruit will remain. Today many things are done which only last for the moment. Here we see that Christ gives us the privilege of bearing fruit that will last for eternity.

What a wonderful privilege we have to be appointed by Christ to bring forth fruit that remains. Here we see that Christ chose us to be useful. Before we became Christians, we felt that our lives were useless. In fact many Christians still feel like their lives are useless. The reason that they feel useless is due to the fact that they have not learned to abide in Christ. As we learn to abide in Christ, we will see our lives become useful and fruitful.

As growing Christians learn to abide in the faith by choosing to learn the Word of God and obey it, by choosing to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit, and by choosing to abide in Christ, they will develop into godly spiritual leaders. Such leaders will be useful and will have a purpose for life. They will be able to make an impact on the lives of others. Perhaps this would be a good time to ask yourself, Am I abiding in the faith? You can only lead others as far as you have gone in your own spiritual life. If you are abiding in the faith, then your life will be useful and you will be making an impact on others.

Chapter 12

Preparing for Much Affliction

What does it mean to prepare the disciples for much tribulation or affliction? Why do Christians experience affliction? Is it important for godly leaders to be prepared for much affliction? These are all questions that come to our minds when we read in Acts 14:22 that Paul and Barnabas taught the disciples, "That we through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

What is meant by tribulation or affliction? The word translated tribulation or affliction means anything that puts pressure on or burdens the spirit. All people experience certain kinds of affliction. However, certain kinds of affliction are the direct result of the spiritual growth that is happening in our lives. That is the reason why Christians must be prepared for much affliction. If we are going to become godly leaders, we can expect much affliction. However, we will also see that this affliction is used by God to give our lives real meaning and purpose. We will look first at the Scriptural causes of affliction. Then we will look at the Scriptural responses to affliction.

Scriptural Causes of Affliction

The Bible gives us at least three causes of affliction or tribulation. The first cause of affliction is something that happens to all people whether they are Christians or not. The second and the third causes are things that cause our spirits to feel pressure because of the fact that we are Christians. It is these two areas that we will emphasize because Christians who are growing will experience much affliction.

The first thing that causes affliction or pressure on our spirit is our own life experiences. All people have these experiences whether they are Christians or not. The Bible tells of several experiences in our lives that place a burden on our spirits. John 16:21 tells us that physical suffering causes us to experience affliction. I Corinthians 7:28 tells us that marriage problems will put pressure on the spirit. II Corinthians 8:2 says that poverty will cause the spirit to experience pressure. Then James 1:27 tells us that the death of a family member will also burden the spirit.

The things mentioned above happen both to Christians and to people who have never heard about Christ. However, Christians experience affliction for two other reasons. That is why it is important to prepare Christians for affliction. As we understand what God says about the additional reasons for affliction, it will also prepare us to handle affliction in a way that pleases God.

The second cause of affliction or tribulation is persecution. John 16:33 says, "These

things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Here we see that we can expect to have tribulation. However, we also see that Christ wants us to have peace while experiencing that affliction. He says that the source of that peace is understanding that Christ has already had victory over the world. As long as we turn the tribulation that we experience over to Christ, we will also have peace in our spirit while experiencing that tribulation.

In Acts 11:19 we see one of the purposes why Christ allows us to experience affliction. That verse says, " Now they who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only." Here we see that persecution was used by Christ to spread the gospel to new areas. This reminds us of the fact that Christ allows tribulation to spread the gospel. We can have peace in our spirit as we realize that God is working through whatever happens to accomplish His purpose.

In Acts 20:23-24 Paul said, "Except that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." When disciples are prepared for much affliction, they will have joy as they do the work that the Lord has for them. A Christian who is prepared for tribulation can focus on the ministry that Christ has for him instead of the opposition that comes because of that ministry.

Disciples who are prepared for tribulation learn to trust God. Paul described some of his experiences when he said in II Corinthians 1:8, "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we even despaired of life." Here we see that the persecution got so bad for Paul that he even wondered if he would live.

However we see his attitude in verses 9 and 10, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, who raiseth the dead, Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Paul shows here that being prepared for tribulation caused him to put his trust in God when persecution came. Preparation for tribulation prepares us to respond in a way that pleases God when the tribulation comes.

This is true for new Christians as well. I Thessalonians 1:6-7 says, "And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. So that ye were an example to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." Because the Thessalonians were prepared for tribulation from the day they became Christians, they depended on the Holy Spirit when persecution came. The Holy Spirit gave them joy and the result was that their lives became an example to all.

A third cause of affliction for Christians is our concern for others. Before we became Christians, we were self-centered and selfish. As the Holy Spirit works in our spirit, we become Christ centered and begin to have the same concerns that Christ had. The concern of

Christ for others is summarized in Matthew 9:36, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they were faint, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

In II Corinthians 2:4 Paul says, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." As we grow in Christ, He gives us a love and compassion for others. That love causes us to experience much affliction and anguish of heart because of our concern for others.

However, Paul goes on to say in II Corinthians 4:16-18 that this concern develops an eternal viewpoint instead of an earthly viewpoint in our lives. Those verses say, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Paul told the Ephesians that his tribulations for them caused him to pray for them. In Ephesians 3:13-14 Paul said, "Wherefore, I desire that ye faint not an my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." A concern for others does cause us to experience pressure in our spirit. However, that pressure causes us to pray that the Lord will work mightily in the lives of those about whom we are concerned. Although we do not have space to explain his entire prayer here, read Ephesians 3:13-21 to see how we should pray for those about whom we are concerned.

As we see three Scriptural causes of affliction, our own life experiences, persecution and our concern for others, we also see that there are Scriptural responses to affliction. As you study these responses, ask yourself if you are making these responses to the tribulation that comes in your life?

Scriptural Responses to Affliction

We could summarize the Scriptural responses to affliction in three sentences. First, we should realize that affliction will come. Second, we are to told to count it all joy. Third, we are to realize the long term results of affliction in our lives.

One of the greatest chapters in the Bible on affliction is II Corinthians 4. In that chapter we learn several important lessons about why affliction will come. In II Corinthians 4:4 we see that affliction will come because we are in a spiritual conflict, "In whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Second, affliction will come because we have chosen to make ourselves servants. II Corinthians 4:5 says, For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your

servants for Jesus' sake." Affliction is the result of a choice we make but what a privilege to make that choice.

Third, affliction causes us to have a different viewpoint. Paul said in verses 8 and 9, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." The reason for this different attitude is due to the fact that a person who becomes strong in spirit reflects the attitude of Christ instead of the attitude of the world.

Fourth, affliction causes us to become more concerned about the development of the inner man. Verse 16 says, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Godly attitudes are one of the key things that draw people to Christ. Some of those godly inner attitudes develop best through affliction.

Fifth, affliction causes us to focus on things that will last for eternity rather than things that will only last a few days or years. Verse 18 says, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." A Christian who is prepared for much affliction begins to carefully look at how he uses his time. Is he making his time count for eternity or just for today?

This brings us to the question of how to respond to affliction since we know that it will come. James 1:2-3 gives us the answer when it says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into various trials, knowing this that the testing of your faith worketh patience." The word that is translated count has the thought to have rule over the mind. It speaks of a decision of the mind that results in actions that follow. We make the choice in advance to thank God for our trials. Then we pray and ask God to give us His strength to thank God when trials come. Then, when the trials do come, we realize that God is in control, thank Him and receive His joy in those trials.

A good illustration of this principle is found in Acts 5:41-42 where we read, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Because the disciples had been prepared for tribulation, they realized that the beating that they had experienced was being used by God to spread the gospel.

The disciples had made the choice in advance to turn any feeling that they had over to the Lord when they suffered. As a result, they counted it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ. The Lord gave them great joy and they continued to share the gospel. The reason they could make that choice was because they had learned to look at the long term results. We would like to conclude this section by looking at just four of those long term results.

First, God wants us to realize that tribulation or affliction cannot separate us from the love of God. Romans 8:35 says, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" After listing many other things in the following verses, verse 39 concludes be telling us that nothing,

"Shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Although we may experience great pressure on our spirit, it will not separate us from the love of God.

Second, God says that tribulation produces patience. Romans 5:3-5 tells us, "And not only so but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience experience; and experience, hope; And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." Here we see that pressure on our spirit will produce patience, experience and hope in our lives. It will also cause us to realize that God has filled our lives with love through the Holy Spirit.

Third, tribulation gives us a totally different viewpoint on life as we focus our attention on what God is doing through that affliction. II Corinthians 8:2 says, "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." The great affliction and pressure on the spirits of the Christians in the churches of Macedonia caused them to be filled with joy and also caused them to be more concerned about the needs of others than they were about their own needs.

Fourth, tribulation prepares us for future ministry. II Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "Blessed by God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God." God comforts us when we are going through times of testing that put pressure on our spirit. Then God gives us the privilege of comforting others with that same comfort when others are going through any kind of trouble or testing that puts pressure on their spirits.

A godly leader will experience much tribulation, because in addition to the normal experiences of life, a godly leader will experience pressure on the spirit both from persecution and also from his concern for others. As a result, if we are going to help people develop as godly leaders, we must prepare them for tribulation.

Perhaps this would also be a good time to ask another question. Paul said his concern for others caused him to experience affliction. Do you have that same kind of concern for those whom God has given to you to help in their spiritual development? Is your life controlled by the love of God and a love for God that causes you to have a great concern for others?

Section V

Church Organization

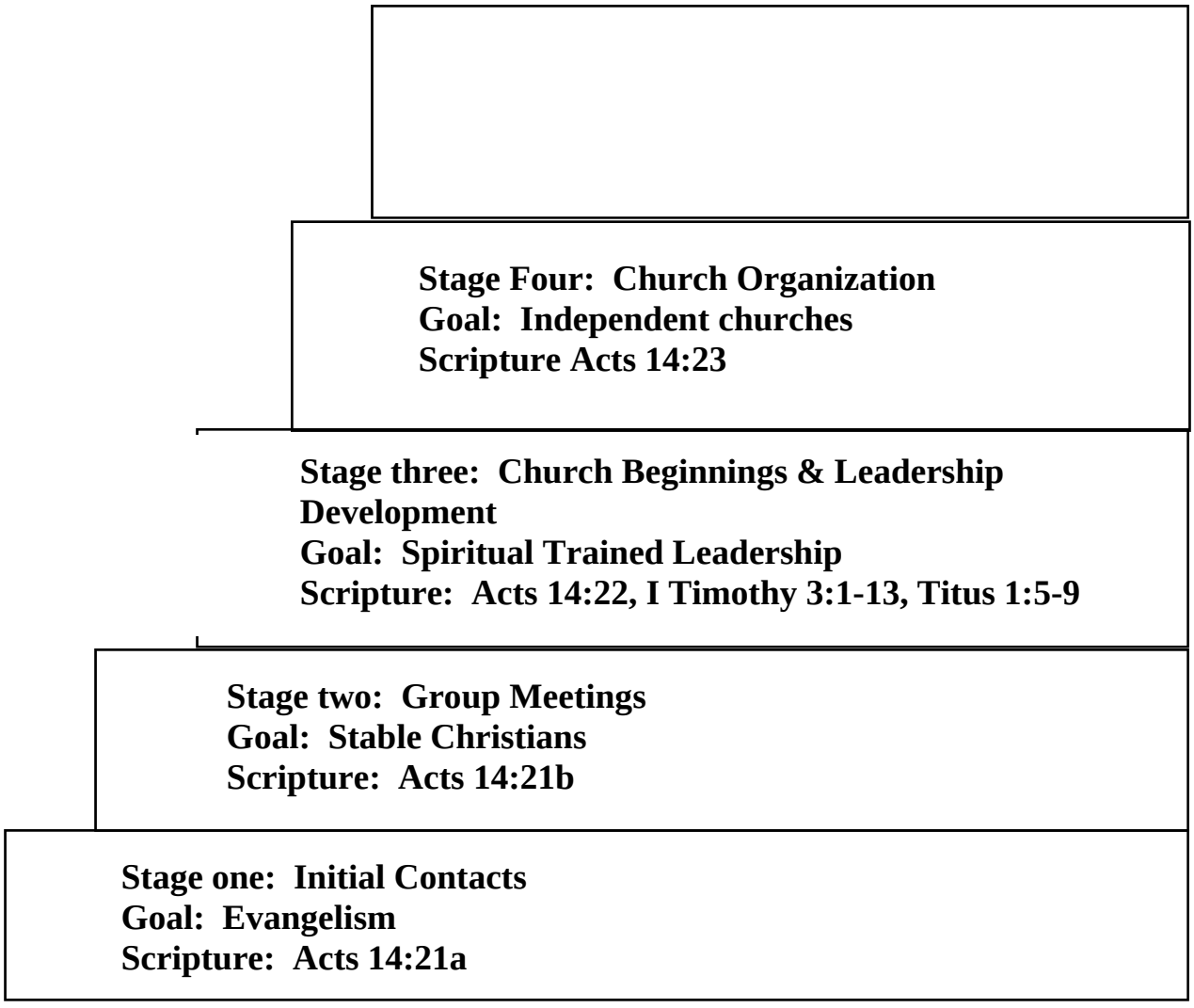
What is a church? How do we know exactly what we are trying to develop? Today people have many ideas about the meaning of the word church. When many people hear the word church, they immediately think of a building. Others think about a particular denomination.

However, the Bible uses the word church in two ways. First, it is used to speak of the universal church that includes all Christians in every part of the world. Second, it is used to speak of local groups of Christians who are led by godly spiritual leaders. It is this use of the word church that we have been studying. Acts 14:23 says, "And when they had ordained elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

In this verse we see several things about the local churches that were being established by Paul and Barnabas. First, they developed a team of spiritual leaders in every church. Second, these leaders were developed from within the local congregation. Third, these leaders were dependent on Christ. Paul and Barnabas expected Christ to work through the lives of these new leaders to further develop each church. In this section we will learn some very important principles about each of these areas because they are all important to the development of strong local churches.

Biblical Church Development

Each church in Acts has these five stages of development



Stage Four: Church Organization

Jerusalem - Acts 6:1-8
Antioch - Acts 13:1
Galatia - Acts 14:23
Corinth - Acts 18:12-18a
Ephesus - Acts 19:11-21

Chapter 13

Development of a Team Ministry

Have you ever watched a team that did not know how to work together? In sports, what happens when each player on a team is only concerned about how many points he can score and has no concern about working with the other players? What happens when players have never been trained to play their positions? What would happen if one player tried to play for the whole team while the rest of the players sat on the bench and cheered?

In Acts 14:23a we read, "And when they had ordained elders in every church." Paul knew that he was leaving the area of Galatia. He knew that there must be leadership for the churches to continue to develop and make an impact on the surrounding area. As a result, Paul appointed a team of leaders in every church. These leaders were to work together as a team. This brings us to the question, "How do we choose the men for the initial team of leaders who will work with us in developing a church? What is our long range goal for that team?

Today many church leaders have never realized that they are actually a team working together to do the work of Christ in the area where God has placed them but with the goal of reaching out from that area to reach many other areas with the gospel. That was the concern of Christ. Later that became the concern of the apostles. One of our great concerns should also be to build a ministry team that will eventually reach out to many other areas.

In His final instructions to His disciples, Christ said several important things. In Matthew Christ told the disciples to make disciples in every ethnic group. In Mark He said to take the gospel to every person. In Luke he said that the message of the death and resurrection of Christ together with the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins was to be preached among all nations. In John Christ said that just as the Father had sent Him, He was now sending the disciples. In Acts Christ told the disciples to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to take to gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth.

As we consider these final instructions, we see that Christ did not plan to do the work of spreading the gospel alone. He built a team of godly men who had a servant's heart. He gave them a commission to make disciples. Then he gave them a vision of a lost world. He gave them a message that would change and transform all who would receive it. He gave them a commission just as His Father had commissioned Him. He helped them to realize that they must depend on the Holy Spirit. He left them empowered to plant churches all over the world.

Christ told us to do the same things He did. In Matthew 16:18 Christ said, "I will build my church." Now he has chosen to build His church through us. We are to be obedient by planting churches everywhere there are people. Just as Christ began by building a team of godly men, if we are to be obedient, we must build a team of godly men to lead each church.

That is exactly what Paul and Barnabas did in Acts 14:23a where we read that, "They ordained elders in every church."

In order to have an effective team ministry, we must build a team of godly men. Five Biblical principles that are important in building a team are: select the people to be on the initial team; remember the goal is to bring people to maturity in Christ; disciple by association; build an interdependent relationship and build the team to the fellowship.

Select the People to be on the Initial Team

Mark 3:13-14 says, "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he appointed twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." Many people were following Christ. However, He chose just a small group for His initial team. The period from the time that Christ first met some of His future disciples in John 1 until He chose the twelve to be with Him was a period of more than a year. Here we see that Christ shows us by His example that it takes time to build a ministry team. In the development of a church, it will also take time to build a godly leadership team.

This brings us to the question, How do we select the people to be on the initial team? Christ teaches us several important principles for selecting the initial team. First, Christ chose men who were responders. In John 1:37-39 Christ invited John and Andrew to come and spend time with him. In John 1:43 Christ invited Philip to follow Him. In Matthew 4:18-22 Christ invited four fishermen to follow Him. In Matthew 9:9 Christ invited Matthew to follow Him. Later these men all became part of the twelve.

We are able to apply this principle in building a ministry team by inviting people to become involved in a Bible study. We can invite people to go with us as we share the gospel with others. Those who respond by being faithful to learn the Word of God and share it with others show that they have a learner's attitude. They will also show that attitude by asking questions. A learner's attitude is one of the key characteristics of those who have a desire to grow and serve the Lord.

Second, Christ chose men who were workers for His ministry team. As we read the book of Mark, we see that all of the individuals that Christ chose were chosen while they were working. Christ knew that people who were working would also work in their service for the Lord. Some people like to talk about what they plan to do but never do it. Others can always find an excuse not to work. A few are just plain lazy. However, some are quick to begin helping without even being asked.

A person who begins helping without being asked usually has a humble attitude. Such a person is not concerned about being noticed. Instead that person has a desire to be useful. In II Timothy 4:11 Paul said, "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you; for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Mark was a worker who was useful and even though Paul had rejected him at one time, Paul had come to realize that he was useful to the ministry. As a result, he added him to his ministry team a second time.

Third, Christ chose men who would have a servant's heart to be on His initial team. In Mark 10:42-45 we read, "But Jesus called them to him and said unto them, Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever would be great among you, shall be your minister; And whosoever of you would be the chiefest shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

As Christ chose the initial men to be on His ministry team, He chose men who had a learner's attitude. He chose men who were workers. He chose men who would develop a servant's heart. Here we see that the first concern of Christ was the inner attitudes of the men that followed him. As Christ ministered to all, He observed the attitudes of those who responded. Luke 6:12 also tells us that Christ spent the entire night in prayer before choosing the twelve. Do not be in a hurry to choose a ministry team. Take time to observe the attitudes of those who will be on the initial team and spend much time praying for the leading of the Lord.

Remember that the Goal is to Bring People to Maturity in Christ

First, Spiritual maturity is the goal in building a team. Colossians 1:28-29 says, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. For this cause I also labor, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily." Here we see that the goal of Paul was to bring every Christian to maturity in Christ. This is a key to remember in the development of a team ministry. Our goal is not just to develop a team ministry. Instead our goal is to develop a team that is becoming spiritually mature so that team can bring others to spiritual maturity.

The word that is translated perfect in verse 28 means to complete, finish, come to an end or mature. It has the thought that God wants every Christian to grow to spiritual maturity. Just as we want our children to grow to physical maturity, God wants the same to happen in our spiritual lives. Spiritual maturity involves several things.

Second, spiritual maturity involves becoming strong in spirit. The world tries to change people by beginning from the outside and trying to work toward the inner man. Such change may change the actions but it does not change the spirit. In contrast, Christ begins changing people from the inside and works out. When we were born of the Spirit at the moment of salvation, our spirit was changed from darkness to light. However, we become strong in spirit as we learn to depend on the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:16, "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

Third, spiritual maturity involves developing love and compassion for the people around us. II Corinthians 5:14 says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Matthew 9:36 says about Christ, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they

were faint, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." As we grow and become Christ centered instead of being self centered, we also become motivated by the love of Christ which produces compassion for others.

Fourth, spiritual maturity involves submitting our will to the will of God. Christ gave us the example when He prayed in the garden in Matthew 26:39b, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." As a spiritual leadership team commits itself to doing the will of God motivated by the love of Christ, that team will be effective in doing the work of God.

Fifty, spiritual maturity involves learning to exercise our spiritual gifts so that we carry out the work of God according to the will of God. As we become sensitive to the spiritual needs of others, spiritual maturity makes it possible to use our spiritual gifts in a creative way to meet the needs of others. Creativity is one of the parts of the spirit. Maturity makes it possible to use our spiritual gifts with creativity. A spiritual leadership team with a variety of different spiritual gifts will make a great impact if it is mature because the members of the team will be exercising their spiritual gifts with creativity.

Disciple by Association

In Mark 3:13-14 we read, "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." Christ showed us a very important principle. Many things are best learned from example. Christ knew that as the disciples spent time with Him, they would begin to develop the same attitudes that He had. The same thing is true for you. People who spend a lot of time with you will develop the same attitudes that you have whether those attitudes are good or bad.

Christ demonstrated two important principles. First, Christ went with the disciples where they were. The first thing Christ did after He called Matthew in Luke 5:27-29 was go to the house of Matthew. Verse 29 says, "And Levi made him a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of tax collectors and others that sat down with them." By going to the house of Matthew, Christ met the friends of Matthew and had the opportunity to share with them. He also had the opportunity to view life from Matthew's viewpoint as He saw the rejection of the Pharisees and scribes. We will be most effective in building a spiritual leadership team if we know their friends and understand the viewpoint of each team member.

Second, Christ had the disciples with Him where He was. Attitudes, motivation, vision, commitment and many other things are best taught by example. These things developed in the lives of the disciples because the things that were important to Christ became important to them. The same thing happens in our lives. The things that are important to us will become important to those who spend a lot of time with us. The attitudes that we have toward others will become the attitudes of the team as we spend time together.

Build an Interdependent Relationship

When Adam and Eve sinned, they suddenly found themselves alone. They were hiding from God and they were hiding themselves from each other. When Christ was preparing to return to heaven, one of the things that He did was build an interdependent relationship between the disciples. First, Christ wanted the disciples to know that He would be with them through the Holy Spirit. Second, Christ wanted the disciples to know that they had each other. As we develop a team, we want to help them become independent of us but dependent upon the Holy Spirit and the body (one another). Then when the Lord removes us through death or in some other way, the team will continue to function effectively.

Just before Christ returned to heaven, He told the disciples in Luke 24:49. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." In John 14:18 Christ said, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Christ wanted the disciples to know both the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. We have a continuous relationship with God because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. As God said in Deuteronomy 31:6 and Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

However, God has given Christians a second thing so that we are not alone. Ephesians 4:25b says, "For we are members one of another." I Corinthians 12:12-27 compares us to members or parts of a body. Just like the human body, Christ shows us that we are all dependent upon one another. As we build relationships between various members of the team, we are to help them learn to work together as a team. As a team learns to work together, they develop an effective team ministry. An effective team learns to depend on every member of the team. As we learn to accept one another with our various strengths and weaknesses, we develop an effective ministry.

Build the Team to the Fellowship

Paul teaches us another important principle for developing a strong spiritual leadership team. First, Paul realized the importance of strengthening the relationships between various members of his team. In II Timothy 4:21 Paul told Timothy, "Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren." Here we see that Paul sent greetings from four of the men on the team to Timothy. Timothy was reminded that he was not alone. There were other Christians who were thinking of him and were concerned about him.

Second, Paul realized the importance of strengthening the relationships between the leadership team and the rest of the church. In Philemon 23-24 we read, "There greet thee Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers." Here we see that Paul was strengthening the relationship between the team and the church that met in the house of Philemon. Most of the letters of Paul conclude with greetings from some of the team to the various churches.

As we find ways to strengthen the relationships between the various leaders and the

people of the church, we are actually building a strong leadership team. The better Christians know and accept one another, the more effective they will be in serving the Lord.

Perhaps this would be a good time to ask yourself the following questions. Am I working to build a leadership team or am I trying to do everything myself? What attitudes do I look for as I work to build a leadership team? Is it my priority to help people grow to maturity in Christ? Do I look for opportunities to share my life with others? Do I build people to Christ and to one another? Do I seek to strengthen relationships between leaders and people?

Chapter 14

Development of Leaders from Within

Someone once described a football game as 60,000 people who desperately need exercise sitting in a grandstand watching 22 men on the field who desperately need rest. A similar description would describe many churches. Many churches have only a few people doing the work of the Lord while most of the people just sit and watch. Christ never planned for the church to work that way.

One of the reasons why many people do not serve the Lord is due to the fact that they do not know what they are to do. Another reason for not serving the Lord is not knowing how to do the work of the Lord. In Acts 14:23a we read, "And when they had ordained elders in every church." From where did these spiritual leaders come? What were these spiritual leaders supposed to do? How does this apply to our churches today?

As we go through the book of Acts, we see that the leadership team for each local church came from within the church. The concern was to develop leadership from within the church. That leadership would then lead the local church and they would not import the leadership from some other church. Today one of the greatest weaknesses of many churches is the fact that they are failing to develop a leadership team from within the congregation. Since every Christian has been given spiritual gifts, a godly leadership team will develop if the focus is placed on developing spiritual maturity.

I Peter 2:2 talks about spiritual newborn babes. Then I Corinthians 3:1-3, I Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 4:14 and Hebrews 5:11-14 talk about spiritual toddlers. I John 2:12-14 talks about spiritual children, spiritual young men and spiritual fathers. In the physical life it is normal for a baby to grow and develop and eventually become a parent. The same should be true in the spiritual life. A Christian who matures properly should eventually become a spiritual parent who has taken the personal responsibility to help one or more other Christians grow to spiritual maturity.

The church in Corinth was the one church where many of the Christians remained as spiritual toddlers and failed to grow to spiritual maturity. As a result, the book of I Corinthians has to deal with problems in every chapter. In I Corinthians 4:14-16 Paul wrote, "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

The difference between an instructor and a spiritual father can be summarized by the following description. An instructor says to come to church where you can be told how to live the Christian life. A spiritual father says follow me and learn from my example how to live the

Christian life. The spiritual father is so concerned for his spiritual children that he spends much time with them to provide an example of how to live the Christian life.

In Acts 14:23 when Paul and Barnabas appointed elders, they appointed men who were spiritual fathers and whose lives provided an example for others to follow. In addition, they appointed men who could train others to be obedient to the commands of Christ. That meant that these men were able to obey the Great Commission to make disciples. In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 Christ commanded us to make disciples by going, baptizing and teaching them to observe all things that Christ had commanded. In chapter three we looked at this commission in detail.

To obey that commission we need to do certain things. First, we are to share the gospel with those who are not yet Christians. Second, as individuals identify themselves as Christians, we help them become a functioning part of that body by learning to practice the new commandment given in John 13:34-35 to love one another as Christ loved us. Third, we teach them the Word of God so that they can become obedient to the Word. We make disciples by giving them an example to follow, by equipping them to minister to the world (evangelism), by equipping them to minister to one another (body ministry), and by equipping them to teach the Word of God.

As Paul and Barnabas left the elders in each church, these were the things that they were to do. To help future churches understand the plan of God, God caused Paul to write to the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 4:11-16 to help them: to understand the equipping gifts, to understand the purpose of the equipping gifts and to understand the results of an effective equipping ministry.

Understanding the Equipping Gifts

In Ephesians 4:11-12 we read, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers. For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." Here we see that God gave various gifts to godly men (elders) so that those men could equip the saints (all Christians) to do the work of the ministry so that the body of Christ (the church) could be built up. A key thing to notice is that the work of the ministry has been given to all Christians and not just to leaders. A second thing to notice is that the Christians need to be equipped in order to do ministry effectively.

As we look at the various equipping gifts, the book of Ephesians points out that two of these gifts provide our foundation. Ephesians 2:19-20 says, "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." These verses tell us that the apostles and prophets are our foundation.

According to Acts 1:21-22 the most important ministry of the apostles was to be eyewitnesses of the resurrection. I Corinthians 15:12-19 points out the fact that we would have no hope without the resurrection. We would still be in our sin and would be facing eternal

judgment. As a result, the apostles are essential to our foundation because they gave eyewitness testimony of the fact that Christ rose from the dead. Our faith is based on that testimony.

According to II Peter 1:19-21, the most important ministry of the prophets was to give us the written Word of God. The Word of God is our source to know what God wants us to do. Our responsibility is to be obedient to the Word. As a result, the prophets are essential to our foundation because they gave us the written Word of God. Because we have eyewitness testimony of the resurrection and the written Word of God, we have a solid foundation that has been built on Christ Himself.

The next gift listed is evangelists. Evangelists are to equip all Christians to share the gospel with those who are not yet Christians. Part of the reason why Paul appointed elders in every church was to make certain that there was at least one godly elder who could equip the Christians in each church to share the gospel effectively. Apparently the elders who had the gift of evangelist in the book of Acts were very effective because Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." Then Acts 91:10 says, "All they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

Today we have given the title of evangelist to a few men who travel from place to place. As a result, those who have the gift of evangelist in each church have not been encouraged to develop their gift. They have not been encouraged to equip all Christians in each church to share the gospel effectively with their non-Christian relatives, friends and neighbors. When a church is committed to helping each Christian grow to spiritual maturity, those with the gift of evangelist will become evident as they grow to spiritual maturity. Then they can equip others to share the gospel effectively both through their example as well as through their teaching.

The gift pastor is the fourth gift mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. The word that is translated pastor is used eighteen times in the New Testament. In each of the other seventeen places where the word is used, it is translated by the word shepherd. After rebuking the false shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel 34, God lists several things that He would do as the true Shepherd of Israel in Ezekiel 34:11-16. Elders who have the gift of pastor can learn much from those verses about how to equip each Christian to minister to one another effectively. In addition, the New Testament lists 43 one anothers (31 positive and 12 negative) which teach how to build stronger relationships in the body.

As elders with the gift of pastor equip all Christians to minister to one another, the church will see strong relationships develop between the various members of the body. One of the tragedies today is that many Christians go to church, say hello to a few people, look at the back of a few heads and leave without ever developing any relationships with other Christians. Our relationship with God and with other Christians is what changes the feeling of being alone that Adam and Eve experienced after they sinned in the garden.

The fifth equipping gift mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 is teachers. In Amos 8:11-12 God said, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord; And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the

word of the Lord, and shall not find it." Just as Israel experienced a great famine of hearing the words of the Lord, many Christians today are experiencing that same famine. That was not the plan of God.

In churches where elders who have the gift of teacher are equipping all Christians to teach the Word of God, the people are able to share the Word of God wherever they go. In fact if a church has one or more elders who have the gift of evangelist, the gift of pastor and the gift of teacher and these men have their ministries based on the foundation of the resurrection of Christ and the written Word of God, that church will be developing other godly leaders. As a result, that church will make an impact both in its own area and in other areas as people go to other areas from that church.

Understanding the Purpose of the Equipping Gifts

In Ephesians 4:12 we are given the purpose of the equipping gifts. That verse reads, "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." Here we see what Christ wants to accomplish through the ministry of godly leaders.

Christ wants to perfect or mature the saints. Here we see that the goal of Christ is to bring every Christian to spiritual maturity. As we grow toward spiritual maturity, we become Christ centered instead of self centered. As we become Christ centered, we begin to have the same concerns as Christ. This causes us to become concerned about the needs of others. The more concerned we become, the greater becomes our desire to see Christ work through our lives to meet the needs of others.

Spiritual maturity causes another very important change to happen in our thinking. We begin to understand how our lives were changed when Christ changed us from sinners to saints. As sinners, our lives were controlled by fear. However, I John 4:18 tells us, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Spiritual growth causes our ministry to come from a heart controlled by love instead of a heart controlled by fear.

As we go on, we see this maturing and equipping of the saints are for a very important purpose. God uses the elders with various spiritual gifts to equip each Christian for the work of ministry (service). Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." When we became Christians, Christ created us to do a new kind of works. Before Christ recreated us, our works had been evil. Now we are created so that our desire is to do good works. Here we see that God uses godly leaders to equip us to do those good works.

Here Christ says that we are to be equipped for the work of service or ministry. Every Christian has been called to ministry. John 15:16 says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you." We have all been appointed to bring forth fruit that remains.

The last phrase of Ephesians 4:12 says, "For the edifying of the body of Christ." The word edifying means to build up. As we are each equipped to do the work of the ministry, the body of Christ is built up in three ways. First, it is built up in size as new people become Christians. Second, it is built up in relationships as Christians learn to show love to one another. Third, it is built up in spiritual maturity as Christians grow in the Word and learn to share it with one another. A church that places the focus on an equipping ministry will see the following results.

Results of an Effective Equipping Ministry

In Ephesians 4:13-14 we see that a church which places its focus on equipping will see each person become mature, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive." In these two verses we see that Christians will become mature instead of remaining as children when the focus is on equipping.

The word that is translated children speaks of children who cannot yet speak clearly. We would call them toddlers or two year olds in the physical life. Spiritual toddlers are Christians who are not growing properly. I Corinthians 3:1-3 says that the act like non-Christians and have envying, strife and divisions. I Corinthians 13:11 says they talk, understand and think like a toddler. Hebrews 5:11-14 says they are dull of hearing and need milk because they are unskillful in the word of righteousness. Ephesians 4:14 says spiritual toddlers are easily deceived by false teachers.

However Ephesians 4:13 says that when every Christian is being equipped to serve the Lord that the result is that each Christian will be growing to spiritual maturity. The standard for this maturity will be that we are becoming more like Christ. As a group of Christians is becoming more like Christ, they will have a tremendous impact on the people around them.

Ephesians 4:15 shows a second result of an effective equipping ministry. Here we see that Christians will be learning to speak the truth in love because they are growing up in Christ. This emphasizes two things. First, growing Christians will be speaking the truth. Second, they will be doing it in love. This will happen because they are recognizing that Christ is the head to whom they are submitting their lives.

Third, Ephesians 4:16 says that each person will become an effective, functioning part of the body, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." God wants every Christian to become effective. He wants each person to learn to function properly.

Several things are mentioned in this verse that happen when Christians learn to function

properly. When Christians are being equipped for ministry, they will be able to work together effectively because they will recognize that their ministries contribute to the entire body. They will be able to work effectively because they have been equipped to minister. Every Christian will be able to be involved in the work of the Lord. The body will increase because it is building up itself in love.

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church. Those elders were given the responsibility to build up every Christian and help every Christian develop an effective ministry. In the next chapter we will learn why Paul and Barnabas could trust these new leaders to carry on the work.

However, before going on, this would be a good time to ask yourself the following questions. Why is it that many Christians are not serving the Lord? How can I help develop a leadership team in our church? Why is it important to have spiritual parents to help new Christians? Why does every church need one or more evangelists, one or more pastors and one or more teachers among its leadership team? What are these spiritual leaders supposed to be doing? What will be the result when a church has a godly leadership team whose focus is to equip every Christian for ministry?

Chapter 15

Development of a Christ Dependent Team

What happens to a church when a church planter leaves that church to go plant another church? Does that church struggle to survive or does it continue to grow and mature? The answers to these questions will determine whether we have planted a church that will make a great impact for Christ or whether we have planted a church that will be weak and dependent for many years.

Paul and the other early church planters had to face these questions every time they moved from one area to the next. However, when they left an area, they expected each church to continue to grow and mature. As we see from the book of Acts, that is exactly what happened.

In Acts 14:23 we see that Paul focused on three key principles for the continued growth and maturity of the churches that were being established. These three keys are very important in the development of a Christ dependent leadership team: maturity in the leadership team, continuing prayer for the churches and entrusting the churches to the Lord.

Maturity in the Leadership Team

The word that is translated elders is used two ways in the New Testament. In a few places it is used to speak of those who are older in age. However, in most places it is used to speak of those who are given responsibility for leadership. From the New Testament we learn several things about the men who were selected to be the leaders in the churches that were established.

First, the elders appointed to lead the churches were men who met spiritual qualifications. I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 both give us a list of the qualifications for spiritual leadership. These qualifications focus on spiritual maturity. Acts 14:21-22 and Titus 1:5 both show that Paul left churches unorganized until there were men who demonstrated spiritual qualifications. When Paul had to leave churches that were not yet organized, Titus 1:5 tells us that Paul sent Titus, Timothy and others to develop and appoint mature men to lead the churches and organize them with mature leadership.

Second, I Peter 5:2-3 tells us why maturity in the leadership team is needed when it says to the elders, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." There we see that the elders are to feed the flock of God, take the oversight and lead by example. Maturity is required for all three of these leadership responsibilities. A person will not be effective in feeding the flock unless he continues to feed himself and apply what he is learning to his own life. A person will only exercise effective

oversight when he has a desire to lead and is not doing it for self gain. Example is the result of a growing maturity.

Third, Acts 20:29-31 and Titus 1:9 both emphasize the fact that elders are to protect the church from false teachers. To recognize false teachers and to be able to show why their teaching is false certainly requires maturity in the leadership team. Only as we help the leadership team grow to spiritual maturity are we preparing them to be dependent on Christ instead of their own wisdom and ideas.

Fourth, Acts 20:32 says that Paul expected a growing maturity to happen in the lives of those who were appointed as elders, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified." Paul expected God to work in the lives of the elders and he expected the Word of God to produce a growing maturity in the lives of the elders. The elders are to continue to grow in maturity as they serve the Lord.

Continuing Prayer for the Churches

Paul prayed for the churches and their elders before he left them. He also prayed for them for the rest of his life. In Acts 14:23 we see that this prayer for the churches before he left them included prayer with fasting, "And when he had prayed with fasting." Here we see that Paul had such a concern for the development of these churches and their leaders that he spent much time in prayer for each church. He did not let anything including eating hinder this concentrated time of prayer for each church.

A look at the letters to three of the churches shows some of the things for which Paul prayed as he prayed for the churches. These prayers give us an example of the way to pray for the churches of which we have been a part in the past. They show that the concern did not end when Paul left a church to go to another area.

I Thessalonians 1:2-3 says, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." As we see this prayer of Paul, we see his prayer was a prayer of thanksgiving for what God was doing in their lives. Things were happening in their lives because Paul expected God to work in their lives and Paul thanked God for what He was doing.

Paul also thanked God for three very important things that God was doing in the lives of the Thessalonians. These were their work of faith, their labor of love and their patience of hope. Of course I Corinthians 13:13 tells us that faith, hope and love are the three things that abide so Paul was rejoicing to see the Lord producing these things in the lives of the Thessalonians.

Here we see why stage 3 is so important in the development of a church. These Christians had been prepared to abide in the faith and now Paul could give thanks because their

faith gave them strength as they worked for the Lord. They ministered to one another as a body as well as sharing the gospel with the world and so Paul could also give thanks for their labor of love. Third, the hope of the Christian is based on the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ and so the Thessalonians could wait with patience even though they were suffering.

Colossians 1:9-11 gives us a second prayer that shows how Paul continued to pray for a church. Those verses tell us, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

In this prayer we see that Paul prayed that the people in the church at Colosse would know the will of God. He also prayed that they would walk in a way that was worthy of the Lord. Paul prayed that they would be fruitful in their ministry. This prayer included prayer that they would increase in the knowledge of God. As we see this prayer also included prayer that they would be strengthened with the power that comes from God.

As we look at this prayer, we see that the whole emphasis is on the maturity and the ministry of the Christians in Colosse. As we pray for the maturity of growing Christians, we can expect the Lord to work in their lives. As we pray for their ministry, we can expect God to work through their lives.

A third prayer is found in Ephesians 3:14-21. Those verses read, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

In this prayer we see that Paul first prayed that the human spirit of each Christian would be strengthened with the power of God by the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we are powerless in ourselves. However, God has all power. As we learn to depend on the Holy Spirit, the power of God is able to work through our lives as well as the life of every Christian. As a result, we need to pray both for ourselves and also for other Christians. As we pray, we will be strengthened with the power of God by the Holy Spirit because we are learning to depend on Him instead of ourselves.

Second, this prayer is that every Christian will know the presence of Christ. Verse 17 begins, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Christ spoke about the importance of abiding in John 15. Now here we see that this is one of the things that Paul emphasized in his

prayers for developing Christians and churches. This should be a part of our continuing prayer for others.

Paul knew that the basis of our salvation is the love that Christ has for us. However, many Christians have very little understanding of this love that Christ has for us. This led Paul to pray that Christians would know and understand the love that Christ has for us. We also need to pray that all Christians will grow in their understanding of this love including ourselves.

Finally Paul prayed that Christians would be filled with all the fulness of God. Being filled with the fulness of God is explained in Ephesians 4:12 and 13 where we read, "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ, Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

A Christian is filled with all the fulness of God when that Christian is brought to maturity and equipped for service so that the body of Christ will be built up. Mature Christians will demonstrate unity of the faith and will have a unity in their knowledge of the Son of God. Such Christians will speak the truth in love and will be effective in their work for the Lord. God wants every Christian to grow to this kind of maturity and so that is why we need to pray this prayer for ourselves and for others.

Entrusting the Churches to the Lord

Acts 14:23 concludes by saying, "They commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." The word that is translated commended means to commit, to entrust or to place with someone. It is the same word Christ used in Luke 23:46 when He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Here we see that Paul and Barnabas entrusted the elders and the churches to the Lord and expected Him to continue to work through the elders to lead the churches.

Several attitudes were present in the lives of Paul and Barnabas when they entrusted the elders and the churches to the Lord. These attitudes give us an example for our own lives as we entrust leadership to others. These attitudes must be present in our lives in order for us to entrust leaders and churches to the Lord.

First, Paul and Barnabas had faith in the Lord that the Lord would continue to work in their lives. In Matthew 16:18 Christ said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Paul and Barnabas had their faith in the Lord and knew that the Lord was the One who was building these churches and working in the lives of the elders and the rest of the people who had placed their trust in Christ.

Second, Paul and Barnabas also expected Christ to work through the lives of the elders as they taught the people the Word of God. They also expected the love of God to flow through their lives both to the other Christians and also to the world around them. One of the things that is important in our lives is that we learn to expect the Lord to work through others.

Third Paul and Barnabas expected the Lord to work through the interdependence that had developed between the Christians. When Paul and Barnabas left, the Christians had the Lord. In addition, they also had each other. One of the things that we want to help new Christians learn is to be a part of the body. In a body, all of the parts depend upon one another. I Corinthians 12:12-31 teaches that we are all a part of the body of Christ and we all need each other.

As new Christians begin to understand that Christ is in them, that He wants to work through them and that all Christians are a body where they are interdependent, they will begin to realize the importance of depending on Christ and His body, the church. When this becomes a part of our thinking, it causes us to realize that we must all depend on Christ for our strength. However, it also means that we can depend on Christ to work through every Christian.

Before we go on to the fifth stage of Biblical church development, this might be a good time to ask ourselves the following questions. What are we doing to help develop maturity in the leadership team? How often do we pray for those whose lives we have touched in the past? Are we really trusting the Lord to work in the lives of others and then through their lives? Are we helping the body learn to function as a team that is interdependent?

Section VI

Church Extension

What is a mature church? How do we know when a church is growing to maturity? We have looked at several things that talk about growth and maturity. We have seen that we want to help each Christian grow and mature. We have also seen that we want a godly leadership team to develop which will be able to help that church continue to grow and mature.

However, there is at least one other thing that happens when people grow to maturity in the physical life. Most people who grow to maturity get married and have children. Then they begin the process of helping those children grow to maturity. Birth is only the beginning. As the children grow, they are taught, they are shown how and they are trained to do many things. Then they are given opportunities to take increasing responsibility and leadership. Finally they go out and repeat the same process.

A mature church does the same five things. We might call them the five Es: evangelism, edification, equipping, expansion and extension.
Evangelism: we <u>reach</u> people for Christ.
Edification: we <u>teach</u> and shepherd people and help them grow.
Equipping: we <u>train</u> people by showing them through on the job training.
Expansion: we <u>share</u> <u>leadership</u> by giving people a small group in the church to lead.
Extension: we <u>send</u> some of the leaders out to repeat the same process in other areas.

Biblical Church Development

Each church in Acts has these five stages of development

Stage five: Church Extension
Goals: Sending churches
Sister Churches
Scripture: Acts 16:1-5

Stage Four: Church Organization
Goal: Independent churches
Scripture Acts 14:23

Stage three: Church Beginnings & Leadership Development
Goal: Spiritual Trained Leadership
Scripture: Acts 14:22, I Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9

Stage two: Group Meetings
Goal: Stable Christians
Scripture: Acts 14:21b

Stage one: Initial Contacts
Goal: Evangelism
Scripture: Acts 14:21a

Stage Five: Church Extension

Jerusalem - Acts 8:4, 14, 11:22
Antioch - Acts 13:2-4
Galatia - Acts 16:1-5
Corinth - Acts 18:18b-19
Ephesus - Acts 19:22, 20:4

Chapter 16

Building an Outreach Team

As we have seen, our Great Commission is to **Make Disciples** of all nations. That will only happen as churches develop a vision that extends far beyond their own area. The vision of Christ was to make disciples among every ethnic group whether that group was large or small. Our vision can be no less if we are going to be obedient to the Great Commission.

In Acts 16:1 we are introduced to a young man by the name of Timothy. Paul and Silas saw Timothy when they came to the cities of Derbe and Lystra. However, Timothy had a good report of the brethren in the cities of Lystra and Iconium according to verse two. Since Derbe and Iconium were more than thirty miles apart, we see that Timothy had not just limited his ministry to the town where he lived. Instead he had a vision that was much greater.

This is a key to extending the church to other areas. We must help people develop the same vision for the world that the Lord has for the world. An Old Testament passage that summarizes the vision of God for the world is Psalm 67. Verse five repeats the summary of the Psalm given in verse three, "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee."

Christ stressed that same vision to the disciples in the New Testament when He said in Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Only as we see the big picture of what God wants to do throughout the entire world will we see the vision of Christ and see how the church of which we are a part is a vital part of completing the plan of God.

Revelation 5:9-10 gives us a vision of what Christ is working to accomplish in the world, "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kingdom, and tongue, and people and nation; And hast made us unto our God a kingdom of priests, and we shall reign on the earth." Here we see that Christ wants people of every kingdom, and every tongue, and every people, and every nation to be saved.

However, in addition to saving people from every kingdom, tongue, people and nation, Christ has an even greater goal. That goal is to see every one of those saved become a part of a kingdom of priests. In the Old Testament the priests had at least three important responsibilities. They were to offer up sacrifices, to speak to God for men (prayer) and speak to men for God (share the Word of God with men).

As a kingdom of priests every Christian has these same three vital responsibilities. Romans 12:1 says that we are to present ourselves as a living sacrifice. I Timothy 2:1 gives us an example of the kinds of prayers that we should pray for all men while Ephesians 3:14-21 gives us an example of our prayers for all Christians. As we have already mentioned, Mark

16:15 tells us that it is the responsibility of every Christian to share the gospel with others.

In order to help each Christian fulfill his or her responsibilities as a priest of God, we need to build outreach teams that are equipped for ministry. These outreach teams should be equipped to minister both in the local area and reach out to other areas. The Word of God gives us at least seven principles for developing outreach teams: help each Christian grow to spiritual maturity, equip all Christians for the work of the ministry, develop an excess of leaders, pray for God's leading, encourage younger Christians to go with church leaders when they minister in other areas and help Christians take responsibility for their home areas.

Help each Christian Grow to Spiritual Maturity

The New Testament points out that each Christian is to grow to spiritual maturity. In order to help us understand how that happens, spiritual growth is compared to physical growth. Just as physical growth is a process that takes time, spiritual growth is also a process that takes time. We will give a very brief summary of that growth process in this book.

A new Christian starts his spiritual life as a spiritual newborn baby. I Peter 2:2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that ye may grow by it." A newborn baby speaks of a person who has just recently become a Christian. That new Christian is commanded to long for the milk of the Word so that he can begin to grow. He needs the milk of the Word and not the meat because the milk (easier parts of the Bible) is easier to understand for one who is just a new Christian. I Thessalonians 2:7-12 points out that he also needs spiritual parents to help him in his understanding and growth.

The next age mentioned is the child who is not yet able to speak clearly. The four passages that mention the baby or child (toddler) are I Corinthians 3:1-3, I Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 4:14 and Hebrews 5:11-14. This level of spiritual maturity talks about someone who started to grow and then stopped growing or even went backward. Everything that is mentioned about the spiritual toddler is bad. Paul points our in I Corinthians 4:15 that what the Corinthians really needed was spiritual parents to help them grow.

I John 2:12-14 mentions three more levels of spiritual maturity. In those verses we are introduced to spiritual children, spiritual young men and spiritual fathers. These verses teach us two things about spiritual children. First, we see that spiritual children know that their sins have been forgiven. Second, spiritual children know the Father. As a result, we see that spiritual children have grown in their understanding to the point that they really understand forgiveness and have learned many things about God from His Word.

I John 2:12-14 tells us three things about spiritual young men. First, young men have developed a strong commitment to Christ. Second, they have the Word of God abiding in them which indicates that they have spent much time studying, memorizing and meditating on the Word of God. This also includes the thought of becoming obedient to what they have learned. Third, they have overcome the wicked one. The rest of the chapter shows that this involves separation from sinful living and separation from false teachers.

Spiritual fathers are also mentioned in I John 2:12-14 where we see that spiritual fathers know Him that is from the beginning. Spiritual children and young men know the Word of God but here we see that spiritual fathers have gotten to know the God of the Word. This speaks of a person who has learned to enjoy regular fellowship with God. I Thessalonians 2:7-12 also points out that spiritual parents have taken the personal responsibility for the spiritual development of one or more spiritual babes or children. It is impossible to be a parent without having one or more children.

Equip all Christians for the Work of the Ministry

In Acts 8:1 we see that the Christians in the church at Jerusalem were scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria by persecution. The apostles were among the few who remained in Jerusalem. Then Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Acts 11:19 says, "Now they who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, traveled as for as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word." We see that the early Christians in Jerusalem were all equipped to preach the Word.

Acts 19:8-10 shows that those who became Christians in Ephesus were all equipped to share the Word of God with others. The result is seen in Acts 19:10 where we read, "And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus both Jews and Greeks." Colossians 2:1 and 4:13-16 show that churches were established in the cities of Colossee, Laodicea and Hierapolis through the witness of these new Christians.

Ephesians 4:11-13 shows that Christ has given spiritual leaders to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry to the building up of the body of Christ. The work of evangelists is to equip all Christians to share the gospel with the lost. The work of pastors is to equip all Christians to serve one another in love. The work of teachers is to equip all Christians to teach the Word of God. Ephesians 4:16 tells us that when each individual part of the body is working properly that it causes growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Today many Christian leaders are trying to do all of the work themselves instead of equipping each Christian to be involved in the work of the ministry. There is too much work to be done for the Lord for that work to be done by just a small group of Christians. Ephesians 4:16 emphasizes the fact that each individual part is to be equipped to work properly. I Corinthians 12:21-22 points out that even the weakest part of the body is necessary and the entire chapter points out that each Christian is important and should be equipped to be effective.

Develop an Excess of Leaders

In Acts 11:25-26 we see that the church at Antioch had two leaders. A year later Acts 13:1 shows us that the church at Antioch now had five leaders. Then when we get to Acts

15:35 we see that just a few years later the church had many leaders. Because the church was continuing to develop additional leaders, Acts 13:1-3 shows us that they were able to sent out an outreach team to take the gospel to other areas. If we focus on helping every Christian grow to spiritual maturity and then equip each Christian for ministry, we will develop an excess of leaders and have enough for outreach teams.

However, in order to see that happen, we must have certain priorities in our ministry. Jethro shared five priorities of a spiritual leader with Moses in Exodus 18:19-21. If we will make those our priorities, we will see additional leaders develop. Jethro told Moses that these are the f**ive priorities of an effective spiritual leader: (1) pray for the people; (2) teach the people the Word of God; (3) show them the way to walk (be an example of godly attitudes and character); (4) show them the work to do (train them through on the job training); and (5) share the work.**

Prayer is the first key to the development of godly leadership. In Matthew 9:37-38 Christ said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." As we use the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-21 as our guide, we can expect God to do exactly what He has promised in Ephesians 3:20-21, "Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Teaching people the whole Word of God is the second key to the development of godly leadership. Acts 20:27 says, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." You cannot teach the whole Word of God without people beginning to see God's vision for the world. The Word also produces growth in our own lives as we are obedient to the things that we are learning. Teaching the whole Word of God is also a key to cross cultural ministry. Different parts of the Bible will impact different cultures. (Leviticus is a key to open doors to some tribes while Revelation or Genesis is a key with other tribes.)

Third, Moses was told to show people the way to walk. As we take younger Christians with us as we minister, they have the opportunity to observe how we respond to angry people, people in sorrow and every other kind of situation. If we are growing in our own spiritual life, they will have the opportunity to see godly attitudes and character in action. Attitudes and character are caught from example rather than taught in sermons. Paul said in Acts 20:20, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have <u>shown</u> you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."

Fourth, Moses was told to show them what to do. People learn best how to teach an evangelistic or follow-up home Bible study by going with you as you teach such a study. They learn best how to comfort those in grief by going with you as you comfort those who are in grief. The disciples learned more about building relationships with people who did not follow God at the home of Matthew in Matthew 9:10-13 than they would have learned from a dozen Bible studies. The same is true of any other kind of ministry.

Fifth, Moses was told to share the work with people who met very basic qualifications

for spiritual leadership. Those qualifications given in Exodus 18:21 are to, "Provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." Notice that the qualifications for spiritual leadership are godly character and not human leadership skills. Since people develop godly character by observing godly leaders, the character of a leader is more important than his skills. As I Corinthians 1:27 says, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." (See Acts 4:13 for an illustration.)

Pray for God's Leading

In Matthew 9:38 Christ told the twelve, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Then in the next seven verses we see that the very ones who were told to pray are the ones that Christ sent out to preach. As the twelve prayed, the Lord answered their prayer by sending them on a short term outreach ministry.

In Luke 10:1-3 the same things happened with the seventy. The seventy were told, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye, therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." Again the very ones that prayed were sent out on a short term outreach ministry.

Then in Acts 13:1-5 we see that as the leaders of the church in Antioch fasted and prayed seeking the will of the Lord, the Lord revealed to them that they were to send out Barnabas and Saul, two of the leaders who were praying. In addition, they also took along John Mark as their helper. As we develop godly leadership and pray for God to show us whom He wants to send out, He will reveal His will to us. Very often it will be those who have the greatest concern to pray that the Lord will then send.

Take Responsibility for Younger Converts who Move

One of the things that happens especially in urban areas is that part of the younger Christians move every year. This also was a very common thing in the life of the early church. As a result, we see that the leaders of the early church took responsibility for the younger converts who had moved to other areas. They sent church leaders to help them in their spiritual growth and ministry.

Acts 8:4 tells us that the younger Christians, "That were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Philip was one of those forced to leave Jerusalem and he went to Samaria. He preached the gospel in Samaria and many responded. Acts 8:14 tells how the leaders in Jerusalem responded, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John." Acts 9:32 and 38 also show that Peter went to encourage the saints in Lydda and Joppa.

Acts 11:22 tells how the church took the responsibility to help younger Christians who had gone to Antioch, "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was at Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch." Here we see

that it was the church and not just the apostles who took the responsibility to help the younger Christians in their ministry at Antioch. Later the church at Jerusalem sent Judas and Silas (Acts 15:27, 30-32) to encourage the church at Antioch.

Encourage Younger Christians to go with Church Leaders

A key to building outreach teams is to encourage younger Christians to go with church leaders when they minister in other areas. One of the first things Barnabas did when he went to Antioch was to get a younger Christian to help him. Acts 11:25-26 says, "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass that for a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught many people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

In Acts 13:5 we see that Barnabas and Saul took John Mark with them to Cyprus. In Acts 16:2-3 Paul and Silas took Timothy with them. In Acts 16:10 Luke was added to the group. In Acts 18:19-20 Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus. Acts 20:4 gives us the best example of Paul's application of this principle, "And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus."

Help Christians Take Responsibility for their Home Areas.

In urban areas many people do not live in the area where they were born and raised. Many others live in several different neighborhoods over a period of years. The early church recognized that this was happening. As a result, they helped Christians who came from areas that had no Biblically sound churches take responsibility for their home areas. In Acts 9:30 we see that Saul was originally sent back to his home area of Tarsus.

Barnabas was originally from Cyprus according to Acts 4:36. In Acts 13:4-5 and Acts 15:39 we see that Barnabas was used by God to plant churches in Cyprus. Acts 18:14 shows us that Aquila and Priscilla had come from Rome. After being used by God to help establish churches in Corinth and Ephesus, Romans 16:3-5 tells us that the Lord brought Aquila and Priscilla back to Rome where they were used by God to plant a church in Rome. Colossians 1:7 -8 and 4:12-13 show how the Lord used Epaphras to establish churches in his home area.

As you think about what your church is doing to develop outreach teams, this might be a good time to ask yourself the following questions. What is our church doing to help each Christian grow to spiritual maturity? What are we doing to equip each Christian for the work of the ministry? Are we working to develop an excess of leaders? Are we praying for God's leading about how to reach out to other areas? Are we taking the responsibility for younger Christians who move to other areas? Do we encourage younger Christians to go with church leaders when they minister in other areas? Are we helping Christians learn to take responsibility for their home areas?

Chapter 17

Becoming a Sending Church

In Acts 14 Paul and Barnabas established several churches in the region knows as Galatia. Then in Acts 16:1-5 Paul and Silas returned to visit these churches. By the time Paul returned, these churches had time for younger Christians to develop and mature. As a result, these churches now had the responsibility to begin to send some of their own people to reach other cultures. In Acts 16:1-4 we see that Timothy goes with Paul and Silas. Acts 20:4 tells us that Gaius later went from Derbe to become a part of Paul's ministry team.

Today some churches begin sending people from their churches out to minister in other areas within a few years. Other churches have existed for many years and have never sent anyone out to take the gospel to other areas. What makes the difference between churches that never send anyone out and churches that quickly become sending churches?

Two key words for becoming a healthy reproducing church are maturity and vision. In the last chapter we talked about helping individuals grow to spiritual maturity. Here we are talking about churches developing maturity. Churches that are immature want to be entertained. Churches that are mature want to reproduce. Vision is seeing what God wants to do throughout the entire world and not just in the local community.

The early church has much to teach us about how to become a sending church. We will look at seven principles which we see in the early church that the Lord used to help churches become sending churches. These are: focus on making disciples rather than decisions, give increasing opportunities for outreach, focus on the will of God, help people lift up their eyes and look on the fields, lead teams in cross cultural ministry, train couples for cross cultural church planting and build multicultural church planting teams.

Focus on Making Disciples rather than Decisions

When groups of pastors get together, the following questions are often asked. How many decisions have you had lately? How many baptisms have you had this month? How many new members have joined your church this year? What is your church attendance? How large is your church membership? These questions all focus on how many people you are bringing into the church. A question that is seldom asked is, How many people has your church sent out to take the gospel to other parts of the world? The focus in most churches is on decisions rather than disciples.

Matthew 13:52 gives a short definition of a disciple, "Then saith he unto them, Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a

man that is a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old." In this verse we see that a disciple has the following characteristics:

1. He has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven (the kingdom of heaven is the rule of heaven over earth so he is one who is submitting to God and allowing God to rule his life).
2. He has become the head of a spiritual household (he has developed a spiritual family by taking the responsibility to help one or more newer Christians grow toward spiritual maturity).
3. He has a treasure (this is a basic understanding of the Word of God).
4. He is able to bring out of his treasure things that are old (he is able to teach the basic truths of the Word of God to others).
5. He is able to bring out of his treasure things that are new (he is continuing to learn and grow so that he has new things to teach to others).

The early church saw decisions in Acts 2:47 but Acts 6:7 shows that they focused on making disciples. Acts 2:47 says, "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The reason they did not focus on decisions is due to the fact that the Lord is the one who adds to the church. Our command is to make disciples of those whom the Lord adds. Acts 6:7 says, "And the word of God increased, and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." The Lord adds to the church but He commands us to make disciples of those who are added.

Give Increasing Opportunities for Outreach

Outreach begins when people begin to see the needs of others around them. When the disciples first began to travel with Christ, they were not really aware of the needs around them. That is why Christ said in John 4:35b, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." He repeated this same thought to the disciples in Matthew 9:36-37, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they were faint, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto the disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

Christ did not stop just by showing the disciples the need. Next he asked the disciples to begin praying about the need. In Matthew 9:38 Christ told the twelve, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Later in Luke 10:26 He repeated the same thought to the seventy, "Pray ye, therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest."

Then in Luke 9:1-6 Christ sent out the twelve to preach the kingdom of God. In Luke 10:1-12 He sent out the seventy. Christ was continually expanding the vision of the disciples, first by showing them, then by asking them to pray for laborers, and then by sending them. As the disciples reached out to others, they were asked questions that they could not answer. This caused them to ask those same questions of Christ. They became good learners because they knew they would be asked those questions again.

Focus on the Will of God

Very early in His ministry, Christ told the disciples in John 4:34, "Jesus saith unto them, My food is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Then in John 6:38 Christ said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me." The night before Christ was crucified, He prayed in John 17:4, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which you gave me to do." Christ concluded that prayer in John 17:26, "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." We might ask what His love constrains us to do. One thing is mentioned a few verses later in II Corinthians 5:20, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Peter got a vision of the will of God as He ministered with Christ. As a result, he said in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Here we see that it is not the will of God that any should perish.

As we focus on the fact that joy comes from doing the will of God, those who are becoming disciples will have a desire to do the will of God. Part of that will is that we extend ourselves to take the gospel to others. As Christians get a vision of doing the will of God, they will be motivated just as the early disciples were motivated to take the message of eternal life to others.

Help People Lift up their Eyes and Look on the Fields

We have already seen that Christ was continually helping His disciples to see the spiritual needs of others. One thing to notice is that Christ did not depend on just telling His disciples about the spiritual needs of others. Instead he took His disciples with Him and showed them the needs of people. Today we largely depend on sermons and classes to instruct people about spiritual needs instead of giving them the opportunity to see spiritual needs. Perhaps that is why most Christians have little awareness of the spiritual needs around them.

Mark 3:13 tells us, "And he appointed twelve, that they should be with him and that he might send them forth to preach." Christ took the twelve with Him so that they could learn from His example. The key to help people see spiritual needs is to take them with you and expose them to needs. However, this may mean a change in the focus of your ministry. It may change your ministry from being a building centered ministry to being a people centered ministry.

Christ took the ministry to people in their homes, along the roads, in the marketplace and in many other places. As a result, the disciples also took their ministries to the streets and homes. Acts 2:46 says, "And they, continuing daily in the temple, and breaking bread from <u>house</u> to <u>house</u>, did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart." Paul gives a summary of his ministry in Acts 20:20 where we read, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable

unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."

Lead Teams in Cross Cultural Ministry

Christ took time to expose His disciples to cross cultural ministry. John 4:3-4 says, "He left Judaea and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria." Most of the Jews did not travel through Samaria but went around it instead. Christ chose to go through Samaria so that He could expose the disciples to the spiritual needs and openness of the Samaritans.

In Matthew 15:21-22 Christ took the disciples into the area of Tyre and Sidon. There they met a woman of Canaan. Canaan and his descendants had been cursed way back at the time of Noah in Genesis 9:25. Yet Christ chose to expose His disciples to the need of this woman of Canaan. The disciples said in Matthew 15:23, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." Instead Christ met the need of this woman and honored her faith in Matthew 15:28. Christ wanted to expose His disciples to the spiritual needs of people of other cultures.

Peter had a difficult time developing a concern for the people of other cultures. The Lord had to speak directly in Acts 10:1-22 to get him to go to the Gentiles. However, Acts 10:23 and Acts 11:12 tell us that when Peter finally got the message that he took six other brothers with him to expose them to cross cultural ministry. Of course verses like Acts 20:4 show that a key focus of the ministry of Paul was to lead teams in cross cultural ministry as he took people with him from several different cultures.

Train Couples for Cross Cultural Church Planting

Paul gives us a perfect example of the way to train couples for cross cultural ministry by the way he trained Aquila and Priscilla. Acts 18:1-3 shows that he began his ministry in Corinth by living and working with them when he first arrived in Corinth. They were Jews who had lived in Rome but he taught them how to reach Gentiles in Corinth over the next two years. We see in Acts 18:8 that many Corinthians believed. As a result, Aquila and Priscilla had many opportunities to observe how to work with the Corinthian culture.

In Acts 18:18-28 we see that Paul took Aquila and Priscilla with him to Ephesus and left them there to begin to develop a nucleus for a church in that city. Later when Paul returned to Ephesus he gave much additional training in cross cultural ministry. In Ephesus we see that the gospel was shared with people from throughout Asia. As a result, Aquila and Priscilla learned additional lessons about how to work with people of other cultures.

This training for cross cultural church planting was very effective. Aquila and Priscilla later returned to Rome where Romans 16:3-5 tells us that they developed a church in their home. Since Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire, all of the cultures of the Roman Empire were represented in that city. Romans 16:4 tells us that their ministry had such an impact that all of the churches of the Gentiles gave thanks for them. (Incidentally Romans 16:5

tells us that one of the leaders in the church that developed in the home of Aquila and Priscilla was one of the first to become a Christian in Asia.)

Build Multicultural Church Planting Teams

In Acts 11:25-26 we see that Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch to assist him in planting a church in the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Antioch had a population of approximately 500,000. The leadership team that developed in Antioch was multicultural. Barnabas was a Jew from the island of Cyprus. Symeon was probably from North Africa. Lucius was from Cyrene in North Africa. Manaen had been brought up in Galilee as a foster brother of Herod. Saul was a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia. That meant that this team had an immediate bridge to five of the different cultures that were represented in Antioch.

This also set a pattern for Paul's later ministry. In Acts 16:1-3 Timothy who was from Galatia and half Greek joined Paul's team. A short time later a Greek named Luke joined the team at Troas in Acts 16:8-11. Over the years at various times Paul had team members from at least fifteen different countries. These multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual teams had a bridge to reach into many cultures.

Today most areas of the world have people from a variety of different cultures. A church that recognizes and reaches out to people of a variety of cultures and helps those individuals of other cultures become spiritual leaders will have a greater impact in their community. These new leaders will become bridges into the other cultures of the community. Such churches will also be training individuals to work effectively on a multicultural church planting team

If a church is going to be obedient to the Great Commission, it must begin training people in the church to go to other cultures to share the gospel. Perhaps this would be a good time to ask yourself the following questions. Are we committed to making disciples rather than just focusing on decisions? Do we give increasing opportunities for outreach? Do we focus on the will of God? Do we help people to see the needs of others? Have I led a team in cross cultural ministry? Are we training couples for cross cultural church planting? Are we working to build multicultural church planting teams?

Chapter 18

Planting Sister Churches

In Acts 9:31 we see that the churches in Judaea, Galilee and Samaria multiplied. In Acts 16:5 we see that the churches were now increasing in number daily. What made it possible for one church in Jerusalem in Acts 2 to develop to the point where churches could increase in number daily in Acts 16:5? This question is one that each of us needs to ask if we want to see our churches today begin to make an impact on the world around us.

One important thing we see is the word established or strengthened in Acts 16:5, "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." The word translated established means to make firm or to make solid. Here we see that the existing churches, not just individuals, were being made strong in the faith. Because the existing churches were developing a leadership team that was strong in the faith, this meant that the churches could send out part of their leadership team to establish new churches in nearby areas.

The most common reason given by churches for not starting sister churches (also called branch churches or daughter churches) is a lack of leadership. Here we see that the early church emphasized helping every Christian grow strong in the faith with the result that the churches were becoming strong in the faith. This provided the leadership necessary to reach out to nearby areas to establish sister churches.

As a result of churches becoming strong in the faith and having the leadership needed to start churches in nearby areas, Acts 16:5 tells us that the churches increased in number daily. We would like to look at the following principles that make it possible for a church to establish sister churches: minister in terms of a region rather than a small area, center the work in the largest population center and the most mobile center in the area, focus attention on the needs of the surrounding area, emphasize our responsibility to multiply churches, report what God is doing in other areas, establish home Bible classes in nearby areas to develop a nucleus for a sister church and help sister churches organize as independent churches.

Minister in Terms of a Region Rather than a Small Area

As Paul's church planting team planted churches in various areas, they focused on the whole region and not just the particular city where they were ministering. This is illustrated so well in Acts 19:8-10 where we read, "And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of

one, Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

We notice several things in these verses. Paul centered his ministry in Ephesus but his concern was for the entire province of Asia. At that time the province of Asia was approximately 200 miles by 150 miles and contained many cities. They city of Ephesus alone had more than 300,000 people making it one of the five largest cities in the Romans Empire.

We also see that all those in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. The church planting team with Paul had a vision to share the gospel with every person in the province and not just those in the city of Ephesus. Their concern was for both the Jews and the Gentiles. This is one of the reasons why Paul developed a multiethnic, multicultural church planting team.

The results of having a vision for the entire region and not just for Ephesus are seen in Colossians 4:13, 16. There we see that churches were also developing in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis. Since Revelation 2 and 3 mention churches in seven cities in Asia, it is possible that some of the churches mentioned in those chapters also developed while Paul was in Ephesus.

Acts 8:11 shows that the church at Jerusalem had equipped the people there to take the gospel to the surrounding area. Acts 9:31 and Acts 16:5 also suggest that local churches thought of their entire region and reached out to plant churches in surrounding areas. Acts 11:18-22 shows that the church at Jerusalem had a concern for the follow-up of Christians who had gone from Jerusalem to Antioch. The concern to reach out to the surrounding areas is a characteristic of the early church. That should become a characteristic of churches today.

Center the Work in the Largest Population Center and the Most Mobile Center in the Area

One of the interesting things about the life of Paul was that his ministry included four of the five largest cities in the Roman Empire. It included several more cities that would have been in the top twenty cities in population. One of the key things about cities is that they influence large surrounding areas. In many cases, large cities like Rome and Antioch influence large portions of the world. Today the two cities in the world with the largest ethnic diversity are Los Angeles and Toronto.

In the previous section we saw how the city of Ephesus had a direct influence on the entire province of Asia. This happened for at least two reasons. Ephesus was the largest city in Asia. First, because Ephesus was the largest city, all of the roads of the region led to Ephesus. Second, people had to come there from the other cities for business. As they returned to their homes, many took the gospel with them making it possible for the gospel to spread throughout the entire region of Asia.

In Acts 2:5-13 we see that Jerusalem had people living there from every nation. God knew that many of these people would be returning to their home areas sooner or later. As a

result, God chose Jerusalem as the place to start the first church even though most of the early leaders came from Galilee. The church was able to spread quickly from Jerusalem to many parts of the world because Jerusalem was a very mobile city. Its population of 50,000 increased to more than 500,000 for some of the feasts.

Antioch was also a very large and mobile city. The city was the third largest in the Roman Empire with 500,000 people. However, the church that was established there had leaders from at least five different Roman provinces by Acts 13:1. This city constantly had people coming and going. As a result, it eventually became the center for the spread of Christianity throughout the world. Again it was a city that was both large and mobile.

Today churches that want to reproduce by establishing sister churches will focus on what other parts of the city, region or world are influenced by people who are already in their congregation. They will also see what areas can be reached by people that can be reached through their congregation. They will view the movement of church leadership as an opportunity to expand the ministry of their church to other areas. They will focus on the multiplication of leaders rather than mourning the loss of leaders. They will help those leaders that move to begin ministries in other areas.

Focus Attention on the Needs of the Surrounding Area

One of the first things that Christ said to His disciples after He first called them in Mark 1:38, "And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth" Matthew 4:23 adds that He then went throughout all of Galilee teaching in their synagogues. Here we see that Christ began from the very beginning to give the disciples a vision for the next towns.

Later in Luke 10:1 Christ sent out the seventy to go, "Before his face into every city and place where he himself would come." Acts 8:4 shows that the church at Jerusalem had a vision for the surrounding areas of Judaea and Samaria. In Acts 10:23 Peter took six brethren from Joppa with him when he went to Caesarea. Of course we have already mentioned how Paul gave the church at Ephesus a vision to reach out to the entire surrounding province of Asia.

Wherever we live today, there are places in the surrounding area that also need a church. Christ told the disciples in John 4:35, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Here we see that Christ calls us to take two actions. First, we are to lift up our eyes. We will never see a need as long as we only look at ourselves. Second, we are to look on the fields. Notice that the word is fields and not just field. There are many areas that surround us. Here we see that God calls us to begin taking action. We are both to lift up our eyes and then we are to really see the needs around us. The needs around us include both our own culture and the people or other cultures who live in the surrounding area.

Christ was taking the disciples through Samaria so that they could begin to see the needs of the Samaritans. The Jews wanted nothing to do with the Samaritans. It was much easier for them just to go around Samaria and just ignore the need of the Samaritans. Today it is very

easy to do the same in most of our large cities. All we have to do is stay on the freeways so that we only see the buildings instead of the people.

John 4:4 tells us that it was necessary for Christ to go through Samaria. Christ realized that He had to go through Samaria rather than around it in order to help the disciples become aware of the need. Second, even though the disciples were in the middle of another culture, they had to become aware of the spiritual needs of that culture. Third, they had to see that there could be a harvest in that culture. John 4:39-41 tells us that Christ helped the disciples to realize that He was able to gather a great harvest among the Samaritans.

Emphasize our Responsibility to Multiply Churches

In Acts 9:31 we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." We see that the churches were multiplied in three areas. We also see the three reasons why the churches were able to multiply.

First, the churches were edified. The word that is translated edified means to promote the spiritual growth and development of character in Christians through example and teaching. Here the word talks about the churches being edified. Part of the ministry of promoting the spiritual growth of churches is to help them see their responsibility to reproduce. As we have seen in the last several chapters, a mature church is a reproducing church. Because these churches were growing in spiritual maturity, it was causing them to reproduce.

Second, the churches were walking in the fear of the Lord. The word that is translated fear speaks of a reverential fear of God. It speaks of a proper fear of displeasing God. As a result, a reverential fear of God produces a desire to obey God. Here we see that the churches were multiplying because they had a desire to be obedient to God.

Third, the churches were walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The word that is translated comfort means to call to one's side. This emphasizes the fact that the churches were depending on the Holy Spirit for strength rather than depending on their own strength. As a result of serving in the power of the Holy Spirit, the early churches began to multiply in just a few years. We need to equip churches to serve in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Report What God is Doing in Other Areas

In Acts 11:1-18 we see the response when the churches heard that the Gentiles had received the gospel. Acts 11:18 says, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." When the Christians heard what God was doing among the Gentiles, it brought great joy to their lives. That joy is immediately followed by a report of how the Jews who traveled to Antioch began to plant the church in Antioch among both the Jews and the Greeks.

In Acts 14:27 Paul and Barnabas gave a report to the church at Antioch about what the Lord had done as they shared the gospel in Galatia. That verse says, "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they reviewed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." This report certainly encouraged the church at Antioch. That church became a church that was known for its ministry of reaching out to other areas with the gospel.

I Thessalonians 1:7 says, "So that ye were an example to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." Here we see that a church that had only been in existence for a short time was already bringing joy to the churches in other areas. In fact, wherever people heard about the faith of the Christians in Thessalonica, those people were greatly influenced. These are just a few of the verses that show how people respond when they hear what the Lord is doing in other areas.

Establish Home Bible Classes to Develop a Nucleus for a Sister Church

Home Bible classes provide an ideal setting for the development of a nucleus to plant a sister church in a nearby area. In Acts 18:7 we see that Paul used the home of a Christian to develop the nucleus for the start of a church in Corinth, "And he departed from there and entered into a certain man's house, named Titus Justus, one who worshipped God, whose house was next to the synagogue."

Home Bible studies are especially effective in church planting because they provide the opportunity for the first three stages of Biblical Church Development. First, home Bible classes provide an ideal setting for evangelism. Christ used the home of Matthew in Matthew 9:9-13 as a place to share the gospel with the friends of Matthew. Today a home Bible study provides the opportunity to answer the questions of friends who want to learn more about the faith of a friend.

Acts 2:42, 46-47 also show that the early church used home Bible studies to help new Christians grow and become stable. Acts 20:20-21 show that home Bible studies were the primary method that Paul used both for evangelism and for follow-up. A review of chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this manual will show how home Bible classes provide very effective ways to help new Christians in their spiritual growth and development.

Home Bible classes also provide an ideal opportunity to begin to develop new spiritual leadership. As new Christians grow in the Lord, home Bible studies provide many opportunities for Christians to develop their spiritual gifts. Each home Bible study has a leader (and often an assistant) who are developing their spiritual leadership. Those who are given the opportunity to teach are developing their teaching gifts. Many opportunities are also provided for serving one another and exercising hospitality.

When working to develop a sister church in an area, it is sometimes possible to begin several home Bible classes in that area where you are working to establish a sister church. This

increases the opportunities for evangelism, follow-up and leadership development. It also develops a larger nucleus for the church that is being planted. When several home Bible studies are meeting in an area, it is helpful to have periodic times when all of the Bible study groups get together for a time of fellowship.

Help Sister Churches Organize as Independent Churches

As several home Bible classes get together for fellowship, friendships will begin to develop between people in different Bible studies. This helps the people in the different Bible studies to be drawn together. Together these Bible study groups form the nucleus for a new church. Then the leaders of the Bible studies together with the leaders of the existing church can begin to pray together for the Lord's timing for the beginning of public services for the new church that is developing.

The leaders of the existing church and the developing church need to determine together the process that they will follow to help the new church become organized. As the new church is organized, the leadership of the new church can then take the full responsibility for their continued development. This frees the original church to begin to focus on the next area where they will begin to plant a church. God will greatly use that church to multiply churches when they have a vision to reproduce.

A Final Challenge for Today

The rapid development of cities throughout the world means that new areas are continually developing where new churches need to be planted. In addition, more and more areas are becoming areas of many cultures and languages. To effectively plant churches in such areas, we need to learn from the early church and develop multicultural, multilingual church planting teams. God greatly used such teams in the early church and He is using such teams today. Perhaps the Lord has been calling you to become a part of such a team to plant churches in various cultures.

We also need to look at the nearby areas around us. We need to see where additional churches are needed. Then we need to pray and ask the Lord how He wants to use us to reach out to those nearby areas and plant churches. In Matthew 16:18 Christ said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Lord will use us to help build His church if we will make ourselves available to Him.

As you have seen in this manual, God had an orderly plan for the development of churches in the time of the early church. That plan is still His plan today. That plan is to use people to help churches develop through each of the stages mentioned in this manual. Today the population of the world is increasing as it has never increased at any time in prior history. There is a great need in every culture for people who will respond to the Lord in the same way that Isaiah responded in Isaiah 6:8, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." Is God calling you to get

involved in the planting of churches either in your own culture or to become a part of a church planting team to another culture?